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The Natural Hair Movement As A Platform For Environmental Education

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In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis,
2014-15 academic year, Pomona College, Claremont, California

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[1]

Introduction: What Is It About Hair?

My fondest memories of my grandmother are of her telling me about the things I could use in my hair and on my skin. Growing up on the Southside of Chicago, the Black hair care products sold in the beauty supply store were mostly for women who wore their hair straight, and most of the lotions and creams advertised in the drugstores for "ethnic" women made my skin break out in hives. This frustrated my grandmother, so she made the best of what we had around the house to get me ready for school every morning. I would always sit on the kitchen floor, between her legs, as she worked her fingers through my curls. That was my favorite part of the morning. One day, when we ran out of hair grease, Grandma Ethel used olive oil from the kitchen to help slick my hair down. When my hair was

[1] Photo provided by Kim Cyrus

done, she told me to keep the bottle and use a bit more for the rest of my body. During the school day, instead of following the multiplication lesson, I focused on the olive oil. I wondered how something used for searing salmon at dinner could also be used on our skin? As I wondered, I became more curious about how other unconventional ingredients could be a part of my beauty routine. This was my first real understanding of cosmetic products and how they might be harmful to my skin. I always kept the recipes my grandmother gave me in the back of head, but as I became more and more influenced by the advertisements of cosmetic industries and peer pressure from my friends, I stored the generational information I had learned in an accessible, but mostly unused part of my brain. I remember faithfully going to the beauty salon for my "touch-ups", which was simply applying more chemical relaxer to the newly grown in hair on my scalp. This cost me about sixty dollars every two weeks, which was a significant amount of money for someone with no job or other sources of income. I had to beg my mom to keep giving me an allowance high enough to afford me touch-ups, which at the time, I so desperately needed for my self-esteem, to feel pretty for my crush in American History second period, and mostly to fit in with everyone else. There were very few girls in my high school with natural hair. Everyone wore it relaxed and neat.

In high school, I saw one of my classmates with the most gorgeous curly hair. Her name was Ida and I had a photography class with her senior year of high school. Ironically, she goes to school at Pomona College with me and was also one of my interviewees for my thesis I am writing now. What was most striking to me then was that she would straighten her hair and wear it curly half the time. I remember

being so mesmerized by her curls and how perfectly imperfect they were. The thickness, the healthiness, and the confidence she wore with it still influence me to this day. I started to think to myself, "what if my hair could look like that?" After going home one day, I typed in the Google search engine, "black women with curly hair." There were lots of pictures of women with curls mechanically achieved with a curly iron, which disappointed me because I did not want to use any more heat on my hair. But then, I came across a picture of a woman with full, kinky curls, which to me looked natural. There was a link to her YouTube channel and I was absolutely in love. I was in love with the autonomy she possessed to do her own hair. Going to the salons for my touch-ups caused me to be so reliant on someone else doing my own hair and this woman's hair was so beautiful without anyone else's hands. From this point on, I was hooked on the idea of cutting relaxed hair off and wearing it naturally. She, like me, had straightened and relaxed hair for most of her life, and decided to cut it off to rock her natural hair. At this point, I was not at all concerned with health hazards of these products. It hadn't occurred to me until my freshman year of college that this was a concern for women of color from my community and around the country. I noticed more blogging and YouTube channels dedicated to addressing common chemical preservatives and surfactants such as methylparabens, formaldehyde, and sulfates. These were, and still are, some of the most commonly used ingredients in large commercial cosmetic companies such as Soft Sheen and Organic Root Stimulator. This, though, did not seem to me the intent of the natural hair movement. What began out of the need for more positive images of Black women in the media not just conforming to white stereotypes, but breaking

free of this in every aspect, including the maintenance and care of Black women's hair. This was first about self-love and preservation, then educating women to be more literate in cosmetic scientific jargon and ultimately protecting women from the ills of the cosmetic industry.

Environmental education has traditionally referred to the study of ecosystems, water conservation crisis in times of drought, nuclear waste disposal, and topics that are most commonly viewed as "scientific." Most formal academic institutions have earth science courses and environmental analysis programs that also reflect the monoculture of what it means to study environmentalism. In this thesis, I offer insight to an often overlooked subject of environmental analysis: environmental toxins as they relate to hair products for Black women in the United States and abroad. The hair care industry is not one we immediately recognize as being related to our environment, but for those interested in environmental health, the exposure to toxins in certain commercial beauty products has proven to be detrimental to the reproductive and overall health of women purchasing these products.

The cosmetics industry is a multi-billion dollar industry and very loosely regulated by the FDA.[2] Many products sold in the cosmetic market contain ingredients that we will never know are unhealthy until they are proven to be after many years of usage. This is the policy of the Federal Food and Drug

[2]"Campaign for Safe Cosmetics : FAQ: General Questions About Cosmetics and Health." Campaign for Safe Cosmetics : FAQ: General Questions About Cosmetics and Health. Accessed October 8, 2014. http://safecosmetics.org/article.php?id=280.

Administration.[3] Often it is too late to prevent adverse health outcomes to occur. During my research, I found that there are actually than several books on the toxicity of beauty products and a plethora of scientific articles on the damaging effects industrial cosmetic chemicals have on our physiological functions. Unfortunately, most low-income communities, the people most affected by this public health issue, do not have access to public health journals that are often expensive to subscribe you are not affiliated with a university. During interviews I conducted over the summer, most of my interviewees could only name a few chemicals they knew were toxic such as methylparabens, a commonly used industrial preservative, and sodium lauryl sulfates, an ingredient commonly used in shampoos and conditioners.[4] My research revealed, though, that there are many more commercial cosmetic ingredients that are harmful to both our external and internal systems. I propose at the end of my thesis an initiative for the development of community workshops around cosmetic label literacy in a way that is relatable and interactive. The environmental movement is very much a white, middle-upper class field of study that often does not spotlight eco-justice issues pertaining to people of color and other marginalized groups. [5] Currently, there are projects underway that and bring environmental literacy course to urban areas, for instance, but the educational disparities in this particular field are still prevalent. For example, Rooftop Garden Mentoring Program here at the Claremont Colleges,

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[3] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.

[4] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald.*Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009

[5] Gibson-Wood, Hilary, and Sarah Wakefield. "“Participation”, White Privilege and Environmental Justice: Understanding Environmentalism Among Hispanics in Toronto." *Antipode*: 641-62.

targets low-income kids from the local area to learn about environmental science and environmental justice issues.

The community built around the natural hair movement has addressed this need in a realistic, relatable way. Blogs and YouTube channels dedicated to natural hair have and continue to speak out against toxins commonly used hair care products targeted to Black women. For example, when the positive association of uterine fibroids with hair relaxer use was discovered by Wise et al in 2012, natural hair blogs such as Black Girl With Long Hair and Curly Nikki warned their followers of using hair relaxers and reported on the details of the study.[6] Teaching the importance of ecological diversity to people who have never been camping or hiking might not be the best strategy for getting more people involved in environmental matters. I believe educating people on topics that are personal and matter to them is an excellent strategy for all aspects of learning. Educating women on the environmental health hazards of the hair care products they habitually buy and use on a daily basis might make environmental education that much more relatable. I am not implying that just because certain communities do not have mountains or rivers in close proximity, that they should not be taught about environmental issues surrounding mining or water conversation. I do believe, though, that teaching topics surrounding toxins in hair care products that both inner city youth and adults interact with on a daily basis is a more palatable way to learn about environmental issues. The natural hair movement is exemplary of the type of initiation needed to discuss environmental issues within appropriate cultural contexts.

[6] http://blackgirllonghair.com/2012/02/are-relaxers-linked-to-uterine-fibroid-tumors/

I learned this lesson while living in northeastern Brazil for a study abroad program in 2014. I stayed in a rural community for one of the program's sustainability courses and learned about their environmental science program for the elementary school. This school had no governmental support, and as a result, the community made the curriculum themselves and incorporated their local botanic garden into classroom lessons and afterschool activities. One of the lessons included teaching children about the medicinal and aromatherapy properties of the plants. Once they learned about the benefits of lemongrass and lavender, they made a soothing lotion with the various plants harvested from their exploration in the garden. The kids were excited, laughing, and most importantly, engaged with the material. Their experience with the community garden spoke precisely to the kind of education necessary to make environmentalism more interdisciplinary, and relatable to everyone from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

The first group of women I will discuss in my thesis are Black women who have dedicated their websites, blogs and other social media platforms to educating communities on natural hair. Many of these women have made it their companies' mission to promote pro-Black images on networks such as Facebook and Instagram. These images include dark-skinned women with Afros and beautifully braided hairstyles, and overall women with healthy, natural, kinky and curly hair. Often following these pictures are ways that the women in the pictures have achieved their hairstyles so that consumers know how to replicate the look. Even more encouraging, there are salons popping up across the country, specifically in Chicago and other large metropolitan cities, who specialize in styling natural, Black hair. For

example, a natural hair salon "Natural Hair Rocks" in Fayetteville, Georgia, has a natural hair blog for hair care tips on the same page clients use to book appointments.[7] These salons serve to educate the Black community on taking care of their hair without frequent or harmful manipulation and manufactured chemicals.[8] These platforms are instrumental in the activist component of the natural hair movement and help to close the educational gap between consumers and cosmetic companies.

The natural hair movement has not just addressed the need for women to be educated on hair and personal care products, but has also provided both a virtual and physical space for women to feel comfortable talking about their health outside the context of skin and hair products. Many sites not only provide information about manufactured preservatives like methlyparabens in moisturizing agents and hair creams, but also speak about adding capfuls of apple cider vinegar in water, for example, to help give a boost of energy in the morning and strengthen the immune system.[9] Numerous natural hair care sites have made it clear that they are also dedicated to helping people who follow their companies maintain an overall healthy lifestyle.[10]

In this way, the natural hair movement is more than about hair care: it is also about helping women become informed consumers, so that they can make healthy choices in the beauty shop and supermarket. For example, in the blog,

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[7] Natural Hair Rocks. Accessed November 10, 2014. http://naturalhairrocks.com/.
[8] "Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care." Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care. Accessed October 12, 2014. http://www.curlynikki.com/.
[9] http://heyfranhey.com/post/53939821162/essentious-acv-dandruff-hair-clarifying
[10] http://urbanbushbabes.com/category/health_beauty/

"HeyFranHey.com", she not only provides healthy styling options for who want to wear their hair naturally, but also includes an entire section of posts about some of the healing properties of foods like avocados and kale.[11] The natural hair movement, I argue, has made women more autonomous and has fostered self-care in a very practical, holistic sense because of this.

Historically, Black women have not been taught to take care of themselves and viewed as either complacent women not needing anything but to take care of others or as sexualized deviant who is only really concerned with having her sexual needs fulfilled.[12] Today, black women are still proscribed those roles automatically made to feel ugly if they are not aspiring to a white standard of beauty.[13] The natural hair movement has spoken against this by advocating for women of color taking care of and paying attention to their bodies in its natural state. The natural hair movement encourages more Black women to exercise, drink more water, and eat healthily in addition to loving their hair as it is. In my interview with the owner of a holistic health shop in Chicago, he states that the natural hair movement was never just about hair. For him, natural hair and a natural lifestyle go hand in hand because "you cannot be conscious about the chemicals you put on your hair and not be curious about the junk you put into your body."[14]

Methodology

[11] http://heyfranhey.com/tagged/nttips
[12] Gibbs, Jewelle Taylor, and Diana Fuery. "Mental Health And Well-being Of Black Women: Toward Strategies Of Empowerment." *American Journal of Community Psychology*: 559-82.
[13] Bell, Ella L. "Myths, Stereotypes, and Realities of Black Women: A Personal Reflection." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*: 146-59.
[14] Joyce's Appendix

In Chicago, I spoke with women who owned natural hair blogs, websites, YouTube channels and even natural hair businesses both in Chicago and in other places including New York, Florida, Louisiana and Georgia. Other women were only participants in the movement and did not own any social media sites on natural hair. Most of my interviews were done via telephone, four interviews were conducted in person, and one interview was done via e-mail. The long distances between my interviewees and myself made this method much more convenient. All of my interviewees over the summer were also asked permission for their interviews to be recorded and transcribed for the publication of this thesis. Every interview was prefaced with this question and each person agreed. Additionally, interviews from my independent study project in Brazil will be included as well.

In Chapter One, I will discuss the politics of hair and beauty across the European and North American diaspora. Perceptions of beauty have been dominantly informed by white males and have created culturally accepted generalizations of Black people, and more specifically, Black women.[15] The most popular stereotypes of Black women include Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire, which became popular during in the mid-nineteenth century. I will talk about how these

[15] Gilman, Sander L. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward An Iconography Of Female Sexuality In Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, And Literature." *Critical Inquiry*: 204.

depictions of the Black female have manifested themselves on television, magazines and advertisements. Works from scholars who have commented on race and representation of Black women in both past and present America, such as bell hooks and Barbara Thompson are included in this chapter.

Chapter Two focuses specifically on the politics surrounding black hair care in the United States and explores this concept further by exploring the effects Black-owned beauty shops previously had on activism, community building and instilling the concept of "black is beautiful" into the larger conversation on black beauty aesthetics in America. I will closely analyze the work of Tiffany Gill, author of "*Beauty Shop Politics"*, who discusses the complexities of this subject. The front cover of her book shows a Black woman doing the hair of another Black woman, while a "Stop Police Brutality" sign hangs above the mirror both the mirror.[16] This image symbolizes how instrumental and powerful it was for Black hair shops to serve as community centers, a forum to speak about public health issues, rather than just hair care shops. And even before this, Madame C.J. Walker and Madame Malone used their hair-related entrepreneurial ventures to speak to customers about spiritual care and self-care in general.[17] Additionally, while in Brazil, I conducted a study on the politics of hair and racial identity amongst women of Bahia and spoke with beauty shop owners as a result of this independent study. I will

[16] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
[17] "Madame C.J. Walker." Accessed December 7, 2014. http://www.mygrowthplan.org/PDF/Madam_CJ_Walker.pdf.

include an interview I conducted with a beauty shop owner in Salvador, Brazil who emphasizes the importance of beauty shops in Afro-Brazilian hair culture.[18]

Chapter Three then discusses the public health hazards associated with commercial cosmetic products geared specifically towards Blacks in the hair care market. I will also include literature from pharmacology databases to review the immediate and long-term effects of carcinogenic and hormone-disrupting ingredients in certain products. Two of many products that have proven to be extremely detrimental to the health are skin bleaching creams and hair relaxers and more than fifty studies have been conducted concerning the health risks associated with using these products.[19] Skin-bleaching creams are known to cause serious skin conditions such as cystic acne, lesions, and discoloration.[20] I take a closer look at the chemical relaxer and its health effects on Black women who use this chemical product for their hair on a regular basis. I will explore the accuracy of the information commonly spread on the social media sites concerning the natural hair movement and discuss their effect on women of color participating both as passive and active subscribers of the sites.

Chapter Four will take a closer look at blogs, websites and YouTube channels that are used to communicate issues and topics concerning Black hair. I briefly discuss the Internet and its effects on education in the "new information age" and how it has been used to fill in educational gaps as well as to connect people from

[18] Joyce's Appendix
[19] James-Todd, Tamarra, Mary Beth Terry, Janet Rich-Edwards, Andrea Deierlein, and Ruby Senie. "Childhood Hair Product Use and Earlier Age at Menarche in a Racially Diverse Study Population: A Pilot Study."*Annals of Epidemiology*, 2011, 461-65.
[20] Olumide, Yetunde M., Ayesha O. Akinkugbe, Dan Altraide, Tahir Mohammed, Ngozi Ahamefule, Shola Ayanlowo, Chinwe Onyekonwu, and Nyomudim Essen. "Complications of Chronic Use of Skin Lightening Cosmetics." *International Journal of Dermatology*: 344-53.

various parts of the country. The Internet in the natural hair movement has been essential to its mobility and one of the main reasons it has reached people both domestically and internationally.[21] One of my interviewees states that she follows blogs that are based in Atlanta, while she resides in Chicago.[22] The internet helps to create spaces for education that might not have been possible by other means. I theorize that the original intent of the natural hair movement was not to provide environmental education for women of color, but initially intended to use social media platforms to share info about achieving hairstyles and buying products that cater to curly, kinky hair. Through interviews and examples from natural hair blogs, I attempt to weave together the stories of women participating in the black hair care movement and shed light on how they believe this movement has affected their lifestyles and overall ability to practice self-care and to feel beautiful.

In the Conclusion, I will discuss what the examination of Black hair care and aesthetics can mean for the academic community within the environmental education curriculum. This thesis would not have been possible without department chairs of Environmental Analysis at Pomona College recognizing the very interdisciplinary nature of environmental studies. I recognize, though, that this interdisciplinary approach is not at all the case for all collegiate departments and is certainly not a part of the dominant discourse surrounding issues of environmental analysis. In a post, "Green but Mostly White…The Lack of Diversity in the

[21] "If It Wasn't For The Internet- A Look at the Natural Hair Movement | Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care." If It Wasn't For The Internet- A Look at the Natural Hair Movement | Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.curlynikki.com/2013/10/if-it-wasnt-for-internet-look-at.html.
[22] Joyce's appendix

Environmental Movement-Part 2" by Marvin Smith from future500.0rg, he discusses the exclusion of people of color within mainstream environmental movements.[23] Therefore, I argue that studies such as this thesis must be done to highlight largely overlooked peoples and their efforts to address environmental efforts most relevant to them.

[23] "Green, but Mostly White...The Lack of Diversity in the Environmental Movement – Part 2 - Future 500." Future 500. Accessed December 3, 2014. https://www.future500.org/green-mostly-white-lack-diversity-environmental-movement-part-2-5-see-httpwww-justmeans-comblogsgreen-mostly-white-lack-diversity-environmenta/.

Chapter 1: Historical Representations of Blacks In Past and Contemporary Media

"The Black body has of course been demonized in western culture; represented as ogreish, coarse, and highly menacingly sexualized. But the Black body has also been valorized, represented as darkly alluring—still highly menacingly sexualized but well, in a good way. And this, historically, is its ambiguous role in the Western imagination."—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.[24]

Analyzing the depictions of Black female bodies in particular is essential for this thesis because although men have participated in the natural hair movement, the majority of activists, bloggers and participants identify as Black women. This is true for the majority of the popular YouTube channel personalities as well. One theory for this gendered spectrum of beauty as it relates to hair is that men in the Black community are not immediately judged based on their hair. Because hair influences how people perceive our character or identity, if men do not have long hair or it is cut very low, people more readily look to their skin color or clothing. Monita Bell, an alumni of Auburn University, writes in her thesis that, "while black men are also included in this binary and have been moved to straighten their hair for decades…Black women have been subject to the most pressure because of traditional links between long, straight hair and femininity."[25] The binary Bell

[24] Thompson, Barbara. *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College in Association with University of Washington Press, 2008.
[25] Bell, Monita. "GETTING HAIR "FIXED": BLACK POWER, TRANSVALUATION, AND HAIR POLITICS." 2008. https://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/1082/Bell_Monita_45.pdf?sequence=1.

speaks of is the discrimination against Black folk with curly hair versus Black folk who wear their hair straightened. Although I will not go into depth about this particular matter, I would like to emphasize that this and my own personal experiences as a Black woman with natural hair, has made me focus particularly on men. But before I discuss the current situation of Black men and women, I am briefly going to talk about the history of Black aesthetics in both the United States and Europe.

Documented depictions of Black people have been caricatured, deformed and exaggerated in popular culture since the 1600s. When European explorers traveled to the many countries in Africa, they sketched and described Black people are savage and uncivilized to other European people. Thompson quotes in her book, "From the beginning of the nineteenth until the twentieth century in Europe and America, the display of indigenous bodies increasingly occurred in circuses and zoos."[26] Even more disturbing, native skulls and organs were displayed in public venues in the name of science and entertainment.[27] Black women were also forced to undergo various medical experimentations for reproductive pharmaceuticals and surgeries without any anesthesia.[28]

One of the most infamous examples of this scientific exploration is the story of Sara Bartmaan, a member of the Khoi Khoi tribe located in the eastern region Southern Africa. In 1814, she was coerced to become a public attraction in Great

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[26] Thompson, Barbara. *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College in Association with University of Washington Press, 2008.
[27] Thompson, Barbara. *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College in Association with University of Washington Press, 2008.
[28] Freedman, Tovia G. "'Why Don't They Come to Pike Street and Ask Us"?: Black American Women's Health Concerns." *Social Science & Medicine*: 941-47.

Britain, where she was often the "centerpiece" attraction at European, upper-class gatherings Sara would stand in a glass, cage-like contraption while men and women gawked and gazed at her buttocks. The men describe Bartmann as handling her buttocks similar to "an instrument, a rattle" as if separate from the rest of her body.[29] Bartmaan was capitalized on, humiliated and dissected by the curious eyes of Great Britain, and later made into a ceramic figure for Great Britain and the rest of the world to gaze upon even today. This was all done because the white explorers observed that women of her tribe had large buttocks and enlarged genitalia, which they concluded was because of their close relationship to apes and orangutans, and thus, deeming the Khoi-Khoi people as "sub-human".[30] The imagery built upon these cultural assumptions during slavery is seamlessly inserted into other aspects of pop culture upon building an image on ideal aesthetics. Black women's buttocks are often highlighted and exaggerated in popular media, today.[31] Post slavery, these images have been used to justify the exploitation of Blacks within political, economic, and social spheres of America. [32]

Black people have historically been represented in popular imagery, both in the United States and abroad, as the antithesis of what, for them, constituted beauty. In the mid-19th-century, black women were proscribed one of three distinct

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[29] Hooks, Bell. *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992. Print.
[30] *The Life and times of Sara Baartman*. First Run/Icarus Films, 1998. Film.
[31] "Dressed in White: The Media's Assault on Black Women's Humanity." Womens Glib. Accessed December 12, 2014. http://womensglib.wordpress.com/2009/03/28/dressed-in-white-the-medias-assault-on-black-womens-humanity/.
[32] "African-American Women's Oppression Has Encompassed Three Interdependent Dimensions. First, the Exploitation of Black Women's Labor Essential to U.S. Capitalism—the 'iron Pots and Kettles'..." Gradient Lair. Accessed November 9, 2014. http://www.gradientlair.com/post/48868656418/black-women-three-areas-of-oppression-collins.

identities: Mammy, Jezebel or Sapphire.[33] For the purposes of the thesis, I will focus mainly on the Mammy and Jezebel figure because of their differentiations from each other based not just on personal traits, but also on the emphasis of physical characteristics. Mammy and Jezebel are often associated with their hair styles. Sapphire, though, was mostly characterized by her angry and violent attitude towards all people she interacted with. She was emasculating towards potential Black male suitors and resistant to all male domination, which to a patriarchal society was the most threatening.[34] Although she was often depicted as having darker skin, more emphasis was placed on her 'wild' attitude.

Part of the reason for these stereotypical characters was to simplify the "Negro" and remove any identity of slaves that might humanize them. Portraying slaves as having personality or civilized would make them too much like white folk and that was not the goal of slavery.[35] Slavery capitalized on the common conception that Africans transported to colonial lands were simply property. Africans were not mothers, fathers, children, friends, intellectuals, emotional, farmers, or any of societal roles that make humans different from other animals.

Jezebel was one of the most popular figures commonly referenced to justify the sexual abuse of Black women. According to authors Linda Perkins and bell hooks of 'Ain't I A Woman', "One of the most prevalent images of black women in antebellum America was of a person governed almost entirely by her libido, a

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[33] "Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America." *Choice Reviews Online*, 2012, 49-4741.
[34] "Arte Sana." Arte Sana. Accessed November 9, 2014. http://www.arte-sana.com/articles/mammy_sapphire.htm.
[35] Plous, S., and Tyrone Williams. "Racial Stereotypes From The Days Of American Slavery: A Continuing Legacy." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*: 795-817.

Jezebel character. In every way Jezebel was the counter-image of the mid-nineteenth century ideal of the Victorian lady."[36] White's depiction of the slave women labeled as Jezebel showed a woman that, according to slave owners, wanted to be taken advantage of sexually and need to be "tamed" and "dominated" by her oppressor. Jezebels were also largely characterized by their light or fair skin and often called a "mulatto/a".[37] In popular Brazilian culture, mulattas were sought after to fulfill the sexual desires of white Brazilians, but it was a rule that men were never to marry a woman with 'african blood'.[38] White women of the slave plantation households, mainly because of jealousy, chastised and verbally abused lighter skinned slave women. One slave recalled the treatment she received from her slave owner's wife: "She was jealous of me because I was light, said she didn't know what her husband wanted to bring that half-white nigger there for."[39] White women either hated on lighter slave women for their looks or for the latter's often times forced sexual relations they had with the men of the household. One slave recalls her slave owner's wife cutting her hair short so that she did not resemble her slave master's youngest sister so much. Another slave woman was sold to another slave owner because she birthed a child by her slave master and the wife was too jealous to stand her living on the plantation anymore.[40] In the film, Imitation of Life

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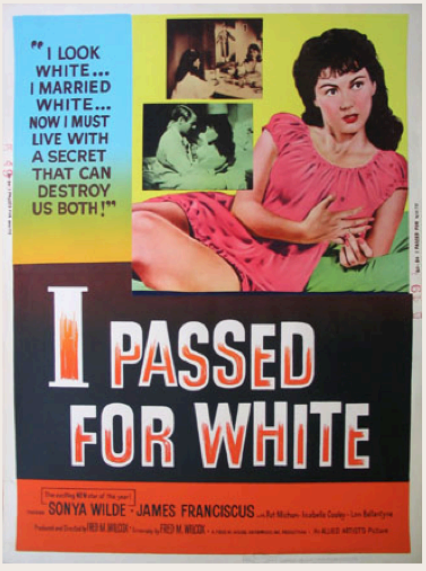
[36] Perkins, Linda M., and Bell Hooks. "Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism." *Political Science Quarterly*: 145.
[37] Morgan, Jennifer L. (Jennifer Lyle). "The History Of Women And Slavery: Considering The Impact Of Ar'n't I A Woman? Female Slaves In The Plantation South On The Twentieth Anniversary Of Its Publication: Introduction." *Journal of Women's History*: 138.
[38] Hanchard, M. "Black Cinderella?: Race and the Public Sphere in Brazil." *Public Culture*: 165-85.
[39] Bush, Barbara. *Slave women in Caribbean society, 1650-1838*. Kingston: Heinemann Publishers (Caribbean) ;, 1990.
[40] "On Slaveholders' Sexual Abuse of Slaves." Accessed December 9, 2014. http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/en

showcased in 1959, "the mulatto is a selfish seductress who loathes blackness and will resort to any means to capture a white husband and live in a white world."[41] This film portrays light skin Black women as being devious and plotting to steal white men. This portrayal is very accurate of how wives of white slave owners' saw light skin Black women and perceived them as a threat because of this. Although "mulatto" women received a great deal of backlash from slave owners' wives, they also faced harsh treatment from white men but in a separate way. To justify the sexual exploitation of fairer-skinned Black women, without glorifying their beauty, popular media such as advertisements, books and movies stereotyped all "mulattas" as being sexually deviant and without moral values.[42] The Black woman's sexuality was worn on her sleeve because of her lighter skin.

[41] *Imitation of Life (1959)*. Universal, 1959. Film.
[42] Bush, Barbara. *Slave women in Caribbean society, 1650-1838*. Kingston: Heinemann Publishers (Caribbean) ;, 1990.



[43]



'I passed for white', 1960, dir. Fred M. Wilcox

[44]

[43] http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/mulatto/more/midwood.htm

Mammy, though, is the opposite of the Jezebel figure. According to author, Barbara Thompson of "Black Womanhood", the word Mammy originally came from the "nineteenth century lexicon of antebellum plantation literature and folklore".[45] It was important for slave owners to divide labor amongst women and one of the labor forces needed were "good, happy Negroes" who could take care of the family and household chores including cooking, cleaning, and nursing the children. Mammies were characterized as always happy and eager to serve their white families and so subservient to the point that they were considered docile. Mammies were also known to wet-nurse white children of the homes they worked for and were not able to breastfeed their own children.[46] The image below displays one of many instances of Black women breastfeeding infants of the white households they tended to.

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[44] "MILK TEETH." : 'Colonialism and the Desiring Machine'. Accessed December 3, 2014. http://bethanyroselamont.blogspot.com/2013/12/colonialism-and-desiring-machine.html.
[45] Thompson, Barbara. *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College in Association with University of Washington Press, 2008.
[46] Allen, Anita. "The Black Surrogate Mother." Accessed October 9, 2014. http://faculty.law.miami.edu/zfenton/documents/Allen--Blacksurrogatemother.pdf.

[47]

Mammies were the female equivalent of Uncle Tom or, within more contemporary television, Uncle Ruckus from The Boondocks. The Boondocks is a popular television show that began as a comic book series, and is a commentary on Black-related struggles within socioeconomics, race, sexism.[48] Common pictures of Mammy consist of a Black woman holding a white, infant child and her breastfeeding the baby. In a teething bottle campaign for the eighteenth century,

[47] Picture by: http://bluemilk.wordpress.com/2012/07/14/the-most-uncomfortable-breastfeeding-photo-you-will-see/

[48] The Boondocks is a popular, contemporary television series that addresses racial issues of the United States in an exaggerated and comical manner. Uncle Ruckus is disgusted with Black people of any shade, even himself, and obsessed with any and everything having to do with white people or white culture. He is not only obsessed, but also willing to stop whatever he is doing for the comfort of the white man. His character comes directly from the stereotype of either Black men as docile, harmless and servile to his white master or the black man who is a dangerous combination of uncontrollable, unintelligent, and incapable of anything.

Mammy figurines were the bottles and the nipple of the bottle was supposed to resemble the nipple of the dark-skinned or literally Black-skinned Mammy. The physical characteristics of Mammy were often enlarged and as a result she was depicted as very tall, broad shouldered, had big lips, wide hips, large breasts, and very dark-skinned. Her clothes were also very plain and made for house chores, while her headscarf was colorful and vibrant, the exact opposite of the rest of her attire.[49] When Mammy was shown on advertisements and widespread pictures, many times her breasts were exposed to emphasize that this was a woman who could provide nourishment as well as exploited.[50] Quaker Oats had Aunt Jemina on the front of their Pancake mix in 1889 and the company officially made her a 'staple' in the late 1930s, as shown below.



[51]

[49] Kowalski, Jennifer. "Stereotypes of History: Reconstructing Truth and the Black Mammy." Stereotypes of History: Reconstructing Truth and the Black Mammy. Accessed October 9, 2014. http://www.albany.edu/womensstudies/journal/2009/kowalski/kowalski.html.
[50] West, Carolyn M. "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire and Their Homegirls." Dr. Carolyn West. Accessed November 9, 2014. http://www.drcarolynwest.com/media/sites/162/files/article_mammy-jezebel-sapphire-homegirls.pdf.
[51] "Billboards of the Past » Quaker Oats Aunt Jemima Pancakes." Billboards of the Past Quaker Oats Aunt Jemima Pancakes Category. Accessed December 12, 2014. http://www.billboardsofthepast.com/category/food/quaker-oats-aunt-jemima-pancakes/.

The widespread dispersal of images of Mammy was instrumental in producing the "other" in relation to the most beautiful: the fair-skinned, white woman.

Characters depicted as modern-day Mammies and Jezebels are still reproduced in popular culture. Many Black women are portrayed on the big screen with these same stereotypical characteristics dating back to slavery. The modern day Mammy appears in movies like Tate Taylor's "The Help" from 2011 and many of African-American director Tyler Perry's movies including Madea's Family Reunion from 2006 and Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor from 2013. Although filmed in 2011, "The Help" dates back to 1960s Mississippi and tells the story of a white woman who recounts the lives of her and her friends' Black nannies. Although this film is clearly set in a different time period, the film's plot still includes the "white-savior" complex of the well-intentioned white, woman working to salvage the complex stories of the maids in her town. In this film, the women do not have agency at all and are oversimplified in their language, while their struggles as Black women working in the highly racist south was oversimplified. The film did not make a real attempt to capture the sexual and verbal abuse that many Black maids faced while serving white southern families and romanticized a very politically charged and an overall difficult time period for Black women working as caretakers.

Some of these images, though, have become attractive to Black women. Popular Black women figures have glorified Jezebel characteristics, including straighter hair specifically, and influenced other Black women to aspire to their image. In my interview with Samantha from Chicago, she speaks about how her peers in high school reacted to her wearing a headscarf (associated with Mammy):

"So I remember like freshman year when I wore my hair straight a lot and when I didn't I would wear hair scarves and little things like that. And at the time, it wasn't the thing, it wasn't cool then and you know, so I had people call me erykah badu or chaka khan and like now I take those things as a compliment but when I was fifteen I was like what are you talking about? And it didn't seem as endearing as it does when I hear those things now."[52]

In "Black Looks and Representation," bell hooks uses pop icon Tina Turner to exemplify how Black women in the entertainment industry capitalized off of wearing tight clothing, skin-lightening makeup and wearing straight, blonde wigs during performances.[53] Tina Turner and more current female artists have risen to fame based on a provocative and sexual imagery in their live performances and recorded music videos. This is true for many performers in the entertainment industry, but for Black women, part of the cultural appropriation that takes place is linked to the commodification of stereotypes developed during slavery of Blacks. This stereotypical image, I argue, is still commoditized and purposefully inserted into popular imagery. bell hooks states, "Popular culture provides countless examples of black female appropriation and exploitation of negative stereotypes to either assert control over the representation or at least reap the benefits of it."[54] By controlling what it means to be beautiful, industries are still able to entice

[52] Joyce's Appendix
[53] "Black Women- Lightened Skin and Straightened Hair." Hit on the Head. Accessed November 9, 2014. http://www.unbiasedtalk.com/conscious-society/media/black-women-lightened-skin-and-straightened-hair/.
[54] Hooks, Bell. *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992. Print.

consumers to buy products such as skin bleaching creams and hair relaxers, conveying the sexiness of the modern-day Jezebel. Many Black women in the media today are seen as racially ambiguous and have features such as loosely curled hair or very fair skin. The "darker-skinned models are most likely to appear in photographs where their features are distorted," hooks observes, and "she is the embodiment of the best of the black female savage tampered by those elements of whiteness that soften this image..."[55] The "best" Black woman has European features but still maintains her exotic and animalistic nature. Therefore, the image many Black women are aspiring to is still not good enough because she is other; she is always lesser compared to the white woman. Below is a comparison of a pop singer, Beyoncé, who is photographed at a public event to the left and then posing for an ad by L'Oreal to the right. This is only one example of many where advertising companies make sure to make their Black models as light as possible.



[56]

Commercialized industries create the false notion that Black women can be respected, valued, and appreciated if they fit into assigned roles stemming from

[55] Hooks, Bell. *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992. Print.
[56] "Misrepresentation in the Media: Black People - Live Mag." Live Mag RSS. Accessed November 9, 2014. http://livemag.co.za/misrepresentation-black-people-media/.

demoralizing and manipulative imagery developed and promoted during slave times. The stereotypes have repeated themselves in the present day culture of beauty aesthetics in the United States and other countries like Brazil. In the next chapter, I focus on how images of Black women dated from the seventeenth century have influenced how women perceive their hair and how this perception has influenced the politics of Black hair.

Chapter 2: The Importance of Hair and Beauty Shops for Black Women Everywhere

"Beauty is subject to the hegemonic standards of the ruling class, because of this, "beauty is an elusive commodity."[57]

African-American women and their hair have a dualistic relationship to each other. On one hand, many Black women see their hair as a struggle to maintain, too coarse, painful to style or irritated by the fact that a style can be ruined by getting caught in the rain without an umbrella for more than a few seconds. But, Black women's hair also serves as their crown. One of the Black women I interviewed in Brazil describes her hair as an integral part of her identity: "*I…I don't know but I consider …I cant say why but…I think it forms my personality because when you have straight hair you have your treatment when you have a frizzy hair you have another treatment and this helps to form your identity. Yes? Because when you have straight hair you are more beautiful and you don't need make a treatment to change they. So…And when you when you choose afro and use your hair you show yourself for the world. How are you? So …when you create your hair free, so natural, so you wanna say a thing."*[58]

Black women take pride in their hair and it shows in their devotion to both in-home care and the frequency women visit beauty salon. I remember being in the

[57] Patton, Tracey Owens. "Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair?: African American Women and Their Struggles with Beauty, Body Image, and Hair." *NWSA Journal*: 24-51.
[58] Joyce Nimocks' Appendix

seventh grade in junior high and my Saturdays being taken over by trips to the salon. I generally made appointments in the mornings and would not leave the hair salon until five in the evening or later. This was one of the distinguishable traits of Black hair salons. On Chicago's south side, there are beauty salons and barbershops on almost every corner and usually they are always filled with Black people. Hair has very much been apart of Black women's lives and many women visit their stylists just as frequently as they go to church.[59]

Black hair shops have been and still are "the place" for Black women to get their hair done and many women, including myself, have historically been very dependent on this industry. Women in my family, who are not natural, will only wear ponytails and buns until they have the time to visit a salon again. Back in the early 2000s, there was not much of a presence of black hair care tutorials on social media sites like YouTube. Tarika says in her interview that when she first started her blog, "Pursuit of Nappiness" in 2009, she did not know of many people seriously discussing natural, curly hair amongst Black women.[60] Hair salons and barber shops were one of the only places where women could talk about and address issues concerning Black hair. Salons have been instrumental in providing hair styling services for Black women who wanted to feel beautiful, but simultaneously restrictive for women who did not wish to conform to normative beauty

[59] Thompson, Cheryl. "Black Women and Identity: What's Hair Got to Do With It?"*Politics and Performativity* 22, no. 1.
[60] Joyce's Appendix

standards.[61] But beauty shops have served as cultural community centers for women to gossip, inform each other about business or educational opportunities and come out of shops feeling beautiful in a society still does not value Blackness. Beauty shops also were instrumental in the establishment of Black-owned businesses.[62]

At the same time, Black salons have also been economic boosters and bring money into Black communities by Black men and women supporting each other in this industry. It is very possible for someone to make his or her living off of styling hair.[63] Although beauty salons have served this purpose, they have also perpetuated the notion that Black women must alter themselves to feel beautiful. Many stylists have encouraged clients to use hair relaxers and other tools to straighten the hair, and discouraged styles such as fros or tightly, coiled natural hair.[64] Both matters complicate the politics of hair care. This chapter will also explore how hair care has never been just about hair. Beauty shops have been cultural centers for communities and social gathering sites for activism. Women have organized around various health issues surrounding the Black community through their beauty salons.[65] The intimacy of hair for Black women, I argue, provides the platform for this to actually happen.

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[61] "The Natural Hair Tax | Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care." The Natural Hair Tax | Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care. Accessed December 2, 2014. http://www.curlynikki.com/2010/09/natural-hair-tax.html.
[62] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
[63] *Good Hair*. Performed by Chris Rock. Lionsgate, 2010. Film.
[64] "Jheri Curl, Conk, Dreadlocks & Afro." Conk, Afro, Jheri Curl & Dreadlocks. Accessed September 9, 2014. http://www.jazma.com/black-hair-history.
[65] Linnan, L. A., and Y. O. Ferguson. "Beauty Salons: A Promising Health Promotion Setting For Reaching And Promoting Health Among African American Women." *Health Education & Behavior*: 517-30.

A Brief History

The early 1900s marked a time when political leaders in the Black community were seeking ways to "uplift" the African American race through both education and entrepreneurship. The push for starting and maintaining black owned businesses was focused mostly on men, and later women found their niche, who were looking to find their place in a time where economic opportunities were scarce.[66] One of the first highly successful, African American female entrepreneurs of the early twentieth century was Madame C.J. Walker (also known as Sarah Breedlove) and Annie Malone. Most women at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were involved in small sales that were gender-specific and afforded Black women some, but not entire, economic freedom.[67] One of the gender-specific spheres included Black women's hair care and the production of hair styling aids. Many Black men and women interested in hair care would conduct their services in private settings including beauty parlors and homes. Pierre Toussaint, a slave from Santo Domingo, served as a very successful wigmaker and hairdresser for the upper class, but as the image of black men as sexual predators saturated the media, hair care services from Black men was no longer desirable.[68] Black men and women have been involved in the hair care industry far before Madame Walker and Malone, but did not have as many opportunities to start their own businesses

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[66] Walker, Juliet E. K. *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*. New York: MacMillan Library Reference USA, 1998.
[67] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
[68] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

without having to be regularly monitored by whites who owned the majority of business in the United States. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Blacks who wanted to sell their products at local markets would need a permit to do so. And along with this permit, they also were not allowed to make a certain amount of money from those products.[69] When Malone and Walker came onto the hair scene, it was the height of racial segregation and Blacks looked more to each other for support in business.[70] Because of these efforts, organizations such as the National Negro Business League (NNBL) promoted more black-owned business situated in Black communities. Many of the female entrepreneurs formed their own sub-committees within large collectives like NNBL to promote community building, charity work and the spread of wealth amongst African American women. At a NNBL conference Walker states, "Negro women's business clubs do not desire to be known only by their names, but by their good works and the influence they exert in encouraging our women in opening establishments of their own, no matter how small the start may be." [71] Madame Malone and Madame Walker were two of the most prevalent figures in the hair care industry, who made their mark in the Black hair care industry by going door-to-door and selling homemade concoctions to women seeking to improve their scalp health. Madame Walker's and Malone's required tools for thermal processing including the infamous hot comb and a claw

[69] Walker, Juliet E. K. *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*. New York: MacMillan Library Reference USA, 1998.
[70] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
[71] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

toothed contraption used to pull the hair, and ultimately stretch the curls.[72] Black women that did not have the business space to invite women to sit down and get their hair done, had to go door-to-door and personally teach women. But even without the space to start a beauty salon, figures like Malone and Walker wanted to teach women about taking care of themselves independently.[73] The natural hair movement thrives off of the same concept but in the digital age. Natural hair bloggers provide a virtual space for women to learn about hair products and healthy living in the comfort of their own homes.[74]

Malone and Walker also gave women the opportunity to sell their products and let the women keep a certain percentage they sold for themselves.[75] This was a radical practice not only because Black women were spearheading the movement towards economic independence through the hair care industry, but also because businesswomen created a community of other female entrepreneurs. Black entrepreneurs understood the power of spreading their newfound economic freedom to others because by sharing their wealth and giving other women jobs within their business, they understood that they would enhance their communities in the process. For women like Madame Walker, the Black hair care industry was a

[72] Peiss, Kathy. "“Vital Industry” and Women's Ventures: Conceptualizing Gender in Twentieth Century Business History."*Business History Review*: 219-41.
[73] Bundles, A. *On Her Own Ground: The Life and times of Madam C.J. Walker*. New York: Scribner, 2001.
[74] "Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care." Curly Nikki | Natural Hair Styles and Natural Hair Care. Accessed October 12, 2014. http://www.curlynikki.com/.
[75] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

part of a larger plan for the liberation and respectability of Black women everywhere.[76]

Walker also states at the thirteenth annual NNBL convention in 1912 after being ignored by her male counterparts for most of the conference, "I have made it possible for many colored women to abandon the washtub for a more pleasant and profitable occupation…the girls and women of our race must not be afraid to take hold of business endeavors…"[77] Similarly, the natural hair movement has given Black female entrepreneurs the opportunity to create their own businesses that respond to the demand for more natural hair products. Companies such as Karen's Body Beautiful, Oyin Handmade and Carol's Daughter are all owned by Black women and have been quite successful. I will not dwell on this but the parallel is present. The struggles Madame C.J. Walker pointed out at the NNBL conference reflect a larger issue of women being placed on the sidelines, while Black men often ignored the struggles of Black women. During Marcus Garvey's historical Pan-African movement during the early 1900s, which sought to liberate the black community based on education and trade work for men, many Black women complained that they were not given a place in its aspirations. An article done by PBS speaks specifically to women's roles in Garveyism, "Garvey, for all his recognition of women and his attitudes of chivalry, relegated them to secondary status. Few women made it into the upper echelons of leadership, and those that did sometimes had a very

[76] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
[77] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

hard row to hoe."[78] So, again, when Madame Malone and C.J. Walker participated in the hair care business, the prevalent male figures of the Black community as significant did not deem their work. Both women, though, proved through their sales and popularity that the Black haircare industry had the potential to grow and be very profitable. Their efforts made the straightening and styling of Black hair popular even after their deaths.

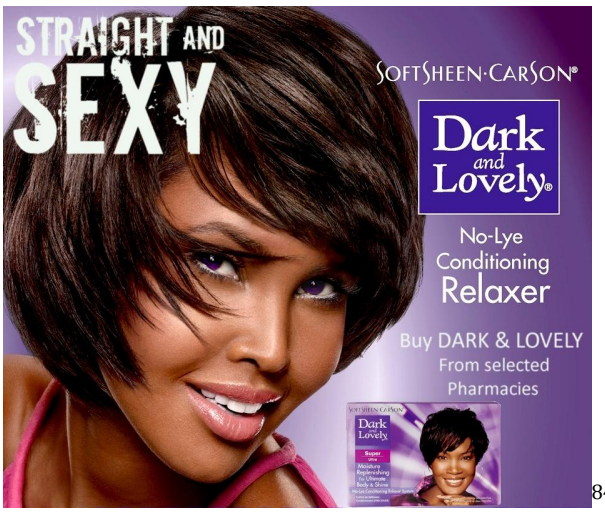
Up until the 1940s, the most common way to straighten the hair was with heat-based hair tools. After this, lye-based relaxers were commercially developed and used to chemically loosen the texture of tightly coiled hair, making it easier to manage for some women and ultimately keeping the hair straight for long periods of time. The main ingredients in both these relaxers are sodium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide and guanidine hydroxide.[79] Both of these products break down the protein bonds in the hair in order to "relax" curl patterns, hence the nickname 'relaxer'. Both of these products can be quite dangerous to handle on your own, which can explain why so many women see beauty salons as vital to their hair straightening practices. The demand for hair relaxers grew and cosmetic companies realized the millions of dollars this "creamy crack" could generate. The hair relaxing industry is estimated to be worth more than 600 million dollars, but if calculations included the weaves, hair styling tools, and other supplemental products, this

[78] Bair, Barbara. PBS. Accessed October 10, 2014. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/sfeature/sf_forum_14.html.
[79] "Types of Relaxers." Accessed December 3, 2014. http://designessentials.com/professionals/education/hair-basics/types-of-relaxers/.

industry could be worth about 500 billion dollars.[80] Many product manufacturers will give catalogues to beauticians to buy their products in bulk and have conditioners and shampoos that will work best with the relaxer for purchase as well. And although Blacks own the salons, mostly non-Black individuals own Black hair care companies.[81] A'leaia Bundles states, "In 1987, Revlon's President said that eventually there are not going to be any Black-owned hair companies and then you could see the gradual takeover [of the Black hair care industry] into the late 80s and into the 90s. And now (2009) very few companies that market to African Americans are black-owned."[82] White males own the majority of stock shares hair companies marketing specifically to Black women, such as Pantene, African Pride, L'Oreal, Dark 'n' Lovely, and Organic Root Stimulator.[83] Many ads from these companies portray all Black women as having light skin, smooth and shiny hair, and always striking seductive poses. Some women in these ads wore revealing dresses or appeared to have no clothes on from the collarbone and up.

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[80] Opiah, Antonia. "The Changing Business of Black Hair, a Potentially $500b Industry." The Huffington Post. January 23, 2014. Accessed September 10, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/antonia-opiah/the-changing-business-of-_b_4650819.html.
[81] "It's Time: Black Women Need to Take Back the Hair Industry." EBONY. Accessed November 12, 2014. http://www.ebony.com/style/black-women-need-to-take-back-the-hair-industry-887#axzz3LftiLHyK.
[82] *Good Hair*. Lionsgate, 2010. Film.
[83] http://www.clutchmagonline.com/2012/05/live-by-the-lye-die-by-the-lye-major-hair-companies-eclipsed-by-black-owned-natural-hair-care-lines/



[84]



[85]

These seductive images have saturated black hair magazines that salons make available for their clients to look at before and after their hairstyles were complete. The hypersexualization of Black women in popular haircare magazines mimic images of Jezebel and reinforce the notion that Black women need to be sexually liberal in order to be acceptable. This happens in popular television, fashion

[84] Web. 12 Oct. 2014. <http://images1.your-city-ads.com/nlarge/collettes-hair-salon-50up-sew-in-weave-40-relaxer-20-shampoo-and-roller-set-price-20_19101043.jpg>.
[85] http://images.sodahead.com/profiles/0/0/1/4/1/3/2/0/1/Hair-straightner-21494152471.jpeg

magazines, and other media outlets, and the Black haircare industry is not exempt from this influence.[86]

Intimacy and Activism

The conversations in beauty salons have been instrumental in maintaining hairstyles of black women and making sure that women passing through the shops feel beautiful, whether or not this involves conforming to white representations of beauty. Although some Black women find that hair salons do not give them a choice to 'go natural', other Black women feel the hair salon is a vital, uplifting part of their lives.[87] Both of these realities make it difficult to categorize hair salons as being detrimental or an asset to the Black community. Hair salons serve its purpose for hair care franchises as well as for the empowerment of women in the community.

The hierarchies in hair texture are very prevalent in beauty salons. Many of the styles available for women require them to straighten their hair and use chemical relaxers. Also, beauticians often describe their hair as "needing" a relaxer and discourage their clients from going "natural". When beauty salons first became popular in the African American community, shop owners did not want to discuss the politics of Black hair care and described hair that was kinky or coily as just "needing to be relaxed." Rose Morgan, co-owner of a famous beauty salon in Harlem during the 1940s, stated in an Ebony Magazine interview, "all hair is bad if it isn't

[86] "Black Bodies: Objects For White Profit, Power and Pleasure." *Gradient Lair*. Web. 12 Dec. 2014. <http://www.gradientlair.com/post/42033424125/black-bodies-objects-white-power>.
[87] Rooks, Noliwe M. *Hair Raising Beauty, Culture, and African American Women*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 1996. Print.

well styled and groomed."[88] She explains that black women have better hair than they thought, but just need proper treatment to help the hair. [89] Here, she oversimplifies the issue of hair by not addressing the fact that Black women have grown up with the notion that their hair is "bad" or will never be good enough by popular media. Although it does speak to the importance of Black hair shops for women of color, by using phrases such, "proper treatment", it does imply that Black hair is imperfect to begin with. Many beauty shops do not speak about systematic oppression of the Black woman's image through media and other public platforms, which underscore black women as needing a flat iron and relaxer to look good. Some professional stylists state quite bluntly that their clients' hair is too "nappy" to work with without any chemicals.[90] Beauty shops establish what it means to have good hair and bad hair, which is often internalized by their clients. This internalization can be seen when we hear Black women saying that they are in "need" of a relaxer and "need" to go back to the hair salon in order to "look right" and feel good. One of my interviwees Tarika, owner of the blog "Pursuit of Nappiness", says in one part of her interview, " It was positive in that, oh Tarika youre starting a site and its great for you and who ever wants to follow."… But I did meet a lot of apprehension in that people were like, "Oh, that's great for YOU, Tarika. Not gonna work for me." Like I'm not about to go natural…It's hot outside, how am I gonna natural?" That doesn't look good on everybody. Which is interesting, like the

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[88] Leslie, M. "Slow Fade To?: Advertising in Ebony Magazine, 1957-1989." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (1995): 426-35. Print.
[89] Walker, S. "Black Is Profitable: The Commodification of the Afro, 1960-1975."*Enterprise and Society*, 2000, 536-64.
[90] Rooks, Noliwe M. *Hair Raising Beauty, Culture, and African American Women*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

hair that grows out of my scalp doesn't look good on everybody."[91] She was referring to when she first started her natural hair blog and the type of backlash she received from women who wore their hair straightened with chemical relaxers. Her experience highlights the many instances of Black women feeling as if they have to get a relaxer.

While living in Salvador, Brazil, I interviewed women about the politics of hair and how they manifested in beauty salons and commercial institutions. Her interview did not just speak to Black women feeling the need to straighten their hair, but also to companies and institutions that promote straighter hair as the standard of beauty.[92] The woman I spoke to in the interview below wears her hair naturally, and spoke to me about her experiences with Beleza Natural. Beleza Natural is a chain of hair salons in Brazil whose statement is to work with Afro-Brazilian women. They claim to embrace naturally curly women, but market a texturizer to their clients, which is chemically based.[93]

A: I tried a treatment from Beleza Natural and it is not natural because they have chemicals products. So they say to you, no this is all natural and you don't have chemical products. How can a product change your hair if it don't have chemical? So I didn't believe but they tried to say to try and a lot of people believe this but the people now are making sense it is not true. But I made a treatment to turn my hair

[91] Joyce Nimocks'Appendix
[92] Joyce Nimocks'Appendix
[93] The woman I interviewed is a native Portuguese speaker, but she wanted to practice her English by doing the interview in Portuguese. Some of her English is not the best, but I kept the interviews in their natural form in order to preserve the words of my interlocutor.

curly. They said ah your hair could be curly if you try. But I make the process because I am in a [profession] that is hard for me enter with this hair. My area is administration and I need my hair straight in this area. Sometimes I put in a ponytail or bun and go. So sometimes if I give it to win something (she is speaking of an award or a graduation) I make it straight with a flat iron but that [takes] a long time. I don't make a treatment because I don't want it falling out. I don't need to be with my straight hair but I think in my graduation I need it to be my straight hair. When I was making my hair in my graduation I needed to be with in hair more straight more beautiful, yes?

J: They made you straighten it? ("They" is referring to the salons and employers)

A: Ah they don't make you but they say ah you don't straight your hair? I think you more beautiful with this? Why you don't try? But you know they are say to you make this, and we don't appeal to you if you are with this appearance. I[pretend] that I don't understand. "Oh do you think I will be more beautiful?" Because sometimes you need to make you are a fool person and not intelligent you don't understand nothing because sometimes it is less difficult and sometimes but you say, "yes so one day I will try" but then you don't make [the hair straight] (laughing). Cause sometimes you have to make things you don't want to make. But I think there is a line for things you don't want to do. You can't force this lie because if you make this you can't be you. You can be sick, you can be mad, and after the time I didn't want more to straight my hair, I didn't more because you will make things you don't want

to do because the people are pressuring you and you make the things after this don't satisfy you and you start to think again this your value. And you understand this. You make things and after you see it is nao vale a pena (not worth it). You make a force and you don't want what you get.

J: O que tipos productos mercados agora para cabelos de negras? (What types of products are used for Black women?)

A: We have few products. If you ask, do you have products for curly hair? And the seller says we have this product is good to your hair is falling when your hair is breaking to treat your hair? But to treat your hair naturally we almost don't have products so you have to look for a product in a specialized place. But in popular stores you don't find good products. The best is to look for natural things. Babosa we cut the edges and we take the gel for mixture in another product.

Informant A also explains that there are products on the market but they do not accommodate the diversity of black hair, are very expensive and often times not that healthy for Black hair in the first place. The lack of hair care products for naturally textured hair in the commercial market is identical to the racial and textural discrimination seen in the cosmetic hair industry of the United States.

> "J: What are the other natural household products that people use? Like, are there other things that people use like coconut oil? Or almond oil or yogurt or other fruits? Do a lot of black women use that in their hair?"
>
> "A: Yes. But I don't use a lot of things. I use coconut, almond oil, abacate (avocado) and I use alma. It is a plant. This plant has very dark green leaves and we make like juice with the leaves and the most time we mix with another thing. But I have a classmate you use a spice in the skin but she said when she was younger her mother pass spice because it make the hair stay more lively (laughing) but she said she uses a lot of things like this. She said when she was a child she used all kinds of plants. She find tomatoes. She says is good to the hair. She 's a hair dresser and she said sometimes the natural product is better than the commercial product."[94]

She also says that almost all the hair salons in Salvador do not accommodate Black women with kinky hair and pressure clients to get relaxers to loosen their tight curl patterns. Even outside of the commercial hair industry, there are barely any professional stylists who deal with Afro-textured hair in Salvador, even though the population is more than ninety percent Afro-Brazilian. During my travels, I was able to speak with a Black beauty salon owner, also located close to Porto da Barra called Salão de Beleza para Negras.[95]

[94] Joyce's Appendix
[95] This interview is translated from Portuguese.

> *"Not many professionals that work with black hair in Salvador at all. Self-esteem of the black woman allow to take their hair. Its important for people to accept their identity and to feel okay in society. I don't agree with products just for black people because the professionals need to know how to work with all hair.*[96]*"*

The salon owner emphasizes that more professionals need to work with Afro-Brazilian women's hair, of all textures, because it affects self-esteem of the women. Only providing products for individuals with a certain type of hair is a form of social exclusion and is a problem for many black women in this area. Although some women do prefer to have their hair straight because they like the way it looks, women who want to wear their hair naturally have a difficult time doing so. It is important to recognize that social beliefs and assumptions have the ability to permeate into physical institutions. Also, although the salon owner believes that there does need to be more versatility in the hair care business, he says that he believes it is necessary for some women to use the chemical on their hair to make it more manageable. He explains that sometimes he just cannot work with coarser hair textures. Women in the salon agreed with this and preferred to use some chemical to improve the manageability of their hair outside of the salon. But even though there are beauty salons now emerging in Salvador for Black women who wear their hair naturally and chemically straightened, there is still discrimination

[96] Joyce's Appendix

within those spaces based on hair texture. A woman whose hair texture is "too kinky or curly" is pressured into altering their hair texture in some way.
The hairdresser explains to me that there are some women who do not "precisam" chemicals because they have "cabelos lisos", but some women need the chemical because it is to coarse.[97]

Beauticians serve as more than just hairstylists for their clients, though. A barber in the documentary film "Good Hair" says that he is the barber, psychiatrist, counselor, friend, community worker and so many other roles that cannot be captured by simply looking at his profession as only having to do with hair. Even more than for the Black community, hair salons are more than just about hair for all women. Quite simply, "Hair salons provide a central place for women to tend to their appearance, enjoy the companionship of other women and exchange information."[98] Although styling hair is the primary goal when you walk into a salon, it has also been a place of refuge and solitude amongst Blacks, both men and women. Black women have organized around the HIV/AIDS epidemic that plagued Black communities in the 1960s and 1970s, women have rallied for fighting the disproportionate fatalities of Black women with breast cancer versus white women with the disease, and supported protests for desegregation of whites and blacks during the '60s.[99] Hence, hair has played a very significant role in the political organizing around issues affecting the Black community.

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[97] Joyce's Appendix
[98] "Social Roles of Hair Salons." Business & Entrepreneurship. Accessed November 11, 2014. http://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/social-roles-hair-salons-11613.html.
[99] Gill, Tiffany M. *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Besides the political significance surrounding hair care for Black women, hair is also a personal subject for women and can even be difficult emotionally to talk about if you have dealt with traumatic experiences hairdressing. Some children have had hair relaxers since as young as three years old and have already suffered from scalp burns and other health issues stemming from improper use of the mixture of chemicals. And many Black women have suffered from derogatory remarks and social exclusion at home and in the work place because of their locks. Cat was one of two women I interviewed with dreadlocks and she spoke to her experience with family members not being so comfortable with her having dreadlocks.

C: …And then I wanted to lock my hair because I wanted locks when I was a lot younger, by my mother would make little disparaging comments here and there so I never did… But I was like, you know what, if I can cut my hair then I can lock my hair too. Because I wanted to do that for a while now. So then I went to a salon and I didn't like the way they did them so then I was about to go up to school and was like, "you know what, I'm about to go to a predominantly white institution, this is going to be the time for me to really get to know my hair because I can walk in here with bantu knots that maybe went wrong, but they don't know any better." If I'm you know thirty and now I want to try bantu knots, like yeah let me not set myself up like that. But I can go natural now and actually get to know my hair. And I wasn't doing anything but a puff at first.[100]

[100] Joyce's Appendix

Cat's remarks about her experience with dreads show the struggles that many women with both dreadlocks and natural hair face at home because of generational perceptions of what it means to have "acceptable" or "good" hair. Also, in this particular point in the interview, she shows how many women have moved away from the hair salon, especially those attending predominantly white institutions, because of the lack of salons that specialize in styling natural hair.

Many women also first have their hair done some in the most intimate places of their lives: their own homes. Many kinds of interactions take place while women get their hair done by their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters including conversations about boys, school life, and things that mattered to women and their families. But as women get older, it becomes almost inappropriate for elders to sit you on the floor and do an adolescent's hair. In an interview with Tarika, she states that, "by the time you reach puberty, a hair relaxer is slapped on your head."[101] Tarika speaks to why Black women do not know how to care for their hair in this statement. Black women are taught to be reliant on the hairdresser and the relaxer from a very early age. I suggest that this is because hair relaxers are so ingrained the hair rituals of Black women and they are encouraged to use a relaxer once hair begins to grow on the scalp.

Hair has evoked conversation and activism both inside and outside the context of beauty salons. Black hair has caused women such as Alice Walker speak against Euro-centric beauty ideals in America and Angela Davis to use hair as a tool to express Black solidarity in the United States. Alice Walker states in her speech

[101] Joyce's Appendix

from 1981, "Eventually, I knew precisely what hair wanted: it wanted to grow, to be itself, to attract lint, if that was its destiny, but to be left alone by anyone, including me, who did not love it as it was."[102] Hair has also made women come together to discuss more than hair; politics, health, and other topics affecting Black women. Hair is not just about hair and it never was. Because of the connection Black women have with their hair, I firmly believe that it has been avenue for social change and community building.

[102] White, Evelyn C. *Alice Walker: A Life*. New York: Norton, 2004. Print.

Chapter 3: Chemical Warfare On Our Heads

According to the World Health Organization, environmental health encompasses all "the physical, chemical, and biological factors" in the lived environment affecting a person's human health.[103] This means that cosmetics and the potential health effects they have on the users of these cosmetics fall within this category. Cosmetics are manmade and available on the shelves of beauty supply chains, commercial all-purpose institutions such as Target and many other suppliers of industrial cosmetics. Industrial cosmetics are manufactured with chemicals such as parabens and sulfates, which have proven to be detrimental to the body if used over long periods of time.[104]

The Environmental Working Groups' Cosmetic Database provides information about all of the toxins located in our every day cosmetic collections. This particular group provides information for consumers on information pertaining to toxicity levels, ingredients, and other related information for commercial cosmetics. One of the sections of their site is a 'myths on cosmetic safety', where one myth is that products sold on the shelf must be safe because they are sold in stores. After this myth, the website responds with this: ***"Fact –*** *The Food and Drug Administration has no authority to require companies to test cosmetics products for safety. The agency does not review or approve the vast majority of*

[103] "Environmental Health." *WHO*. Web. 12 Dec. 2014. <http://www.who.int/topics/environmental_health/en/>.
[104] "How Dangerous Are Parabens, Sulfates, and Phthalates in Everyday Beauty Products?" *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 16 Sept. 2013. Web. 5 Dec. 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/quora/how-dangerous-are-paraben_b_3932609.html>.

products or ingredients before they go on the market. FDA conducts pre-market reviews only of certain cosmetics color additives and active ingredients that are classified as over-the-counter drugs (FDA 2005, 2010)".[105]

The hair care industry falls under the Food and Drug Administration, since hair care products are, by definition, drugs. The definition of a cosmetic by the FDA is anything that is used to alter or enhance one's physical appearance. Soap does not technically constitute a cosmetic, but is considered a cosmetic by many in cosmetic industries[106]. The FDA's rules and regulations for cosmetics are much different than other products they oversee, such as food and pharmaceutical drugs. Cosmetic industries are not required to test their products over extended periods of time for toxicity or potential health hazards. Additionally, according to the FDA website again, "under the law, cosmetic products and ingredients do not need FDA premarket approval…" [107] Therefore, this industry is not heavily monitored and allowed to produce and market cosmetic products much faster than food products, which can be very beneficial to manufacturers. There is a general list of toxic chemicals that are both restricted and prohibited such as formaldehyde and vinyl chloride, but other than the listed substances, other ingredients that are not listed and considered toxic are still used in commercial products.[108] In this thesis, I will focus on hair care products as they relate to the Black hair, but will also examine

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[105] "U.S. Food and Drug Administration." *FDA Authority Over Cosmetics*. Web. 12 Aug. 2014.<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/LawsRegulations/ucm074162.htm>.
[106] "U.S. Food and Drug Administration." *FDA Authority Over Cosmetics*. Web. 12 Aug. 2014. <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/LawsRegulations/ucm074162.htm>.
[107] "U.S. Food and Drug Administration." *FDA Authority Over Cosmetics*. Web. 12 Aug. 2014. <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/LawsRegulations/ucm074162.htm>.
[108] "U.S. Food and Drug Administration." *Prohibited & Restricted Ingredients*. Web. 1 Dec. 2014. <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceRegulation/LawsRegulations/ucm127406.htm>.

other related cosmetic products geared specifically towards African American women in the United States and abroad. Other products discussed are skin lightening agents, facial creams, deodorants, body lotions, and oils. Many of these products have been tested by scientists and have been shown to affect reproductive and endocrine systems of women and female children.[109] The cosmetic items listed have been and continue to be sold in major beauty supply chains and commercial stores.

The natural hair movement has focused on providing literacy around cosmetic toxins just as much as they have provided information regarding natural hair styles.. The cosmetic industry has thousands of products on the shelves and toxic chemicals used in some of these products are strongly associated with malfunctioning reproductive and endocrine systems.[110] Studies have shown that certain cosmetic chemicals have detrimental effects on the endocrine system, for example, by contributing to the early onset of menstrual cycles and breast development in young African American girls.[111] Furthermore, manufactured chemicals have also been linked to the frequency of uterine fibroids in Black women.[112] This is alarming not only because of the adverse health effects possible with both long-term and short-term use of specific cosmetic products, but also because there is a correlation to incidence of these negative health effects and race.

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[109] Mclachlan, John A., Erica Simpson, and Melvenia Martin. "Endocrine Disrupters and Female Reproductive Health." *Best Practice & Research Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*: 63-75.
[110] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald. *Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009.
[111] "Study Links Hair Products to Early Puberty in Girls." Environmental Working Group. Accessed December 2, 2014. http://www.ewg.org/enviroblog/2013/01/study-links-hair-products-early-puberty-girls.
[112] "Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women." Medscape. Accessed December 12, 2014. http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/759283.

Scientific and social studies related to cosmetic products and their cultural significance, reveal that Black females are affected more than White females by toxins in cosmetics in the United States. A brochure for Black women titled, "Not So Pretty" produced by SafeCosmetics.org states explicitly that "Black women are disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals in the workplace, in communities from cosmetics."[113] The article also notes that Black women spend 5.7 billion dollars on cosmetics and visit the salon twice as much as White women. And furthermore, the cosmetics used by Black women are often more toxic than cosmetics marketed to any other group.[114] Therefore, this is a not only a public health issue, but a social justice issue as well.

One of the first major publicized concerns in the last few decades surrounding safety of commercial cosmetics occurred when the Look Good Feel Better program launched in 1989 by the Personal Care Products Council Foundation for women diagnosed with breast cancer.[115] This campaign worked to help the women undergoing chemotherapy to 'feel good' using popular make-up brands such as L'Oreal and Revlon. It turned out, though, that many of these products contained known carcinogens not mentioned by any of the companies investing in the campaign and donating their products.[116] This was extremely alarming to breast cancer advocates and it was clear that there were underlying motifs as to why these

[113]"Not So Pretty: Toxic Products Marketed To Black Women." Safe Cosmetics. Accessed December 4, 2014. http://safecosmetics.org/downloads/SafeCosmetics_BlackWomen_brochure.pdf.

[114] "Not So Pretty: Toxic Products Marketed To Black Women." Safe Cosmetics. Accessed December 4, 2014. http://safecosmetics.org/downloads/SafeCosmetics_BlackWomen_brochure.pdf.
[115] http://lookgoodfeelbetter.org/about-lgfb/history
[116] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.

companies were even able to advertise their products for the campaigns. The large, cosmetic companies had donated thousands of dollars to the American Cancer Society and this certainly gave the Feel Good campaign a hefty incentive to allow these cosmetic companies to participate and be promoted within the ACS's effort.[117] Currently, there are more than $50 billion spent on the cosmetic industry alone.[118]

When industrial cosmetic ingredients were first manufactured, there was no requirement that they be tested first. Such a requirement did not occur until Rachel Carson's Silent Spring gained popularity and made the Environmental Protection Agency seriously look into the health hazards of industrial chemicals such as DDT.[119] DDT was found to cause reproductive disorders and promote the development of cancer among those who were in direct contact with the substance.[120] Another industrial compound, Bisphenol A (BPA), is an environmental estrogen that is known to disrupt endocrine system functions and used for manufacturing polycarbonate plastic. BPA was found in linings of baby bottles and other plastic containers such as generic plastic water bottles.[121] A study done by scientists vom Saal and Hughes in 2005 found that "low doses of BPA have now been reported to alter brain chemistry and structure, behavior, the immune system, enzyme activity, the male reproductive system and the female reproductive system in a variety of

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[117] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.
[118] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.
[119] Hay, A. "DDT and the American Century: Global Health, Environmental Politics, and the Pesticide That Changed the World." *Journal of American History*, 2012, 678-79.
[120] Effects of DDT. (n.d.). Retrieved December 3, 2014, from http://people.chem.duke.edu/~jds/cruise_chem/pest/effects.html
[121] "Are Plastic Baby Bottles and Formula Cans Safe?" BabyCenter. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.babycenter.com/0_are-plastic-baby-bottles-and-formula-cans-safe_14387.bc.

animals, including snails, fish, frogs, and mammals."[122] It is likely that because some animals, especially species of mammals excluding humans, have similar body physiological systems, BPA would have similar effects on humans after ingested BPA through either water or exposure on the skin. This is important because BPA is not just located in plastic baby bottles, but many cosmetics are sold in plastic containers: shampoo and conditioner bottles, chap stick tubes, and hair and body lotion bottles. Despite studies, the FDA rules BPA as safe. In July of 2013, though, they ruled that BPA is no longer to be used in infant formula plastic liners due to "abandonment" of its use, and not for safety reason. And the FDA quotes, "A (BPA)-based epoxy resins as coatings in infant formula packaging because this use has been abandoned. FDA's action is based solely on a determination of abandonment and is not related to the safety of BPA." [123]

Many scientists and environmental justice groups have also organized to find literature on the indirect effects of industrial chemicals on unborn children. In 2004, the Environmental Working Group conducted a study with Commonweal by taking blood samples of the umbilical cords from ten newborn babies born in the United States at random and found "287 chemicals in the babies' cord blood, including 180 chemicals that cause cancer in humans or animal, 217 that are toxic to the brain and nervous system, 208 that cause birth defects or abnormal development in animal studies" [124]These chemicals were all "industrial chemical compounds" which

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[122] Vom Saal, Frederick S., and Claude Hughes. "An Extensive New Literature Concerning Low-Dose Effects Of Bisphenol A Shows The Need For A New Risk Assessment." *Environmental Health Perspectives*.
[123]http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/FoodAdditivesIngredients/ucm355155.htm
[124] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.

included "pesticides, stain repellants, flame retardants, plasticizers, even PCBs that were banned in the 1970s."[125] Apparently, environmental scientists at that time who knew about this study were surprised with the overwhelming amount of hazardous matter in the babies' blood. Most people I interviewed did not even mention these chemicals when I asked them about their knowledge of industrial chemicals in commercial products including cleaning products and other household items not in the category of commercial cosmetics.[126] In the book, "Not Just A Pretty Face," one woman describes her discovery of all the chemicals found in her baby's blood as 'violating' because she did not give permission for those chemicals to enter her body or her child's body.[127] This relates to the educational gap between consumers and manufacturing companies. The need to educate consumers about their daily exposure to environmental chemicals is critical and an ongoing battle. For example, the Love Canal and Hooker Chemical Company (now Occidental Petroleum Corporation) was another notorious example of large chemical companies not informing the community about how their toxic waste can affect their public and environmental health. Residents affected by the irresponsible toxic waste disposal suffered from ailments such as urinary tract infections, asthma and low white cell blood counts.[128] Hence, this is not a new subject, but worth highlighting that repeated patterns of negligence to inform communities occurs with in large

[125] http://www.ewg.org/research/body-burden-pollution-newborns
[126] Joyce's Appendix
[127] Malkan, Stacy. *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Gabriola, B.C.: New Society Pub., 2007.
[128] http://www2.epa.gov/aboutepa/love-canal-tragedy

industries. The natural hair movement is also concerned with filling in these kinds of educational gaps.

But let us first look at the cosmetic industry and its unique relationship to Black women. The cosmetic industry has affected women from different socioeconomic backgrounds in various ways. A study conducted in 2000 by Nancy Maxwell titled "Social Differences in Women's Use of Personal Care Products: A Study of Magazine Advertisements, from 1950-1994," showcased the prevalence of commercial product advertising, including hair care products, in popular magazines for Black and white women. The study randomly selected magazine journals, which included hair, deodorant, and feminine care product advertising. Samples were taken from popular magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Mademoiselle* and *Essence*/*Ebony*. Ladies' Home Journal and Mademoiselle were both magazines targeting white women, while Ebony/Essence magazine only targeted Black men and women. Out of all the issues sampled in *Mademoiselle* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, "hair care products were advertised as containing hormones or placenta only twice" but in *Essence*/*Ebony* magazine, *more than 70 hair and scalp products advertised contained hormones and placenta.* Also, the skin bleaching creams advertised in Essence/Ebony magazine contained ammoniated mercury, which was later restricted by the US FDA in the 1970s. Skin bleaching creams were not advertised to white women.[129]

Many large cosmetic industries, excluding the hair-relaxing industries, did not put forth much effort to advertise to black consumers before the 1960s, until

[129] Davis, Judy. "New Hair Freedom? 1990s Hair Care Marketing and the African-American Woman." *Milestones In Marketing History*: 31-40.

advertising companies recognized the large potential buying power of Blacks in the formal economy.[130] And companies beyond the cosmetic industry took advantage of the opportunity to make more money off of Blacks starting in the 1960s by using popular radio stations and magazines for mostly Black audiences. The almost tripling of Blacks living on the north-east and north-central regions of the United States attracted big industrial brands such as Tide, Ivory Soap, and Comet cleanser to dedicate some of their advertising funds to the Black community.[131] Sales marketing companies used black-owned social media networks to reach the desired demographic and better relate to their newly sought after consumers. One of the major supporters for white-owned companies diversifying their advertising efforts was the publisher of Ebony magazine, John. H. Johnson, and he worked to make industries realize that Black consumers were important for their economic development. He emphasized that equal consumer opportunities would lead to more revenue for the corporations and Blacks as well. Once Johnson made his opinions public for advertising companies, interested investors increased their marketing to Blacks three times as much than before.[132]

To actually sell the products, however, executives in the marketing departments also needed to make their products appealing specifically to Blacks. After cosmetic monopolies realized that Blacks were not simply interested in assimilating into white culture and wanted more accurate representations of

[130] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.
[131] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.
[132] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.

themselves shown in advertisements, they began to use African-American models for advertising. Another prevalent figure, D. Parke Gibson, specialized in marketing and sales among Blacks, and provided services to major companies like Coca Cola, Avon Products, Columbia Pictures, Greyhound, and other chain corporations. Gibson's company also published an article called "How To Sell Today's Negro Woman," which essentially told companies to, once again, use black women as models and to not refer to women as "Negress or Negresses."[133] The 1960s was also a time when the term "Black Power" became popular and companies wanted to capitalize on "blacks' growing sense of national pride."[134] "Soul music" and "soul food" were terms used to promote products to both blacks and whites during the 60s. Blacks felt that these larger companies related to them on some level by knowing cultural terms while whites would be attracted to feel "hip" if popular, Black terminology was used to describe products. During this time as well, "white-owned companies made a concerted effort to produce [personal care products]" after realizing that Blacks spent a significant portion of money on cosmetics.[135] Marvin Cook was a Black chemist responsible for providing chemical formulas of black personal care products to interested white-owned companies. The efforts of large companies to gain access to Black dollars is very much so true even in today's cosmetic economy. Products for black women appropriated black culture to

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[133] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.

[134] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.

[135] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.

increase sales, but black people do not own most of the Black haircare industry.[136] Often, this is because of how difficult it is to enter the business. In the '60s, large companies made it hard for Black owned businesses to advertise their products in magazines and on television. Because existing, big-name companies had funds available already from monopolization of the industry, these corporations dominated advertising in all aspects. White-owned companies had "enormous capital resources to draw from, allowing them to overwhelm the far smaller African-American firms with their advertising, merchandising, and distribution."[137] By using images of Blacks that represented Hollywood's depiction of "beautiful" on the front of hair relaxing kits and makeup, women believed those products were what they needed to purchase to conform to societal pressures and be acceptable.[138] Revlon, a hair-care company, used Black celebrities such as Billy Dee Williams and Jayne Kennedy to advocate for their products.[139]

An article published by James Clingman in the *Sun Reporter*, a Black run newspaper from1998, was dedicated to the brief history of Black hair care companies and how white-owned corporations dominated the Black hair care industry.[140] This take over began with Johnson Products when they took over a popular, Black hair company named Soft Sheen in 1992.[141] Soft Sheen is one of the largest Black hair care companies in America. Due to Soft Sheen development of the

[136] Weems, R. E. "The Revolution Will Be Marketed: American Corporations and Black Consumers During the 1960s." *Radical History Review*, 1994, 94-107.
[137] Ingham, John N., and Lynne B. Feldman. *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[138] Ingham, John N., and Lynne B. Feldman. *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[139] Clingman, James. "The Future of Black Hair Care Companies." *Sun Reporter*, September 3, 1998.
[140] Clingman, James. "The Future of Black Hair Care Companies." *Sun Reporter*, September 3, 1998.
[141] http://www.loreal-finance.com/eng/news-release/loreal-acquires-soft-sheen-in-the-united-states-54.htm

Care Free Curl, they were most successful and generated about 81 million dollars a year. At this time, Soft Sheen was owned by a Black man, Edward Gardner. Unfortunately, Soft Sheen is no longer Black-owned and was sold to L'Oreal in 1998.[142] One of Revlon's corporate representatives said in reference to the Black hair market during the mid-1980s, " We don't want just part of the market, we want all of it."[143] And according to the book, "African American Business Leaders", the Black hair-care market was worth $1 billion dollars in 1988.[144] When Revlon publicly released this statement, Blacks all across the United States, including Chicago, boycotted their products. The pattern of non-Black corporate take over of the black hair care industry continued to be repeated for almost all ethnic hair care companies. In the later years of the twentieth century, Revlon and Avon began to target to African-Americans and began to gain shares in the black hair care industry as well.[145]

The author of "The Future of Black Hair Companies", James Clingman, quotes "We are throwing our dollars to sharks, and they are getting fat and happy at our expense. The sad part is that we continue to do so, even after being insulted by those who benefit from our dollars."[146] He also points out that the community ramifications of Black cosmetic companies being bought out acknowledging that Black owned companies provided jobs for the black community and "stood as

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[142] http://www.loreal-finance.com/eng/news-release/loreal-acquires-soft-sheen-in-the-united-states-54.htm
[143] [143] Ingham, John N., and Lynne B. Feldman. *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[144] [144] Ingham, John N., and Lynne B. Feldman. *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[145] Jones, Richard. *Breaking the Psychological Bondage of the American Standard of Beauty*. IUniverse, 2007. 262.
[146] Clingman, James. "The Future of Black Hair Care Companies." *Sun Reporter*, September 3, 1998.

paragons of entrepreneurial tenacity and savvy for Black youth."[147] He speaks to the fact that Black-owned businesses will be able to keep money in the Black community and prioritize jobs to Black youth. This, in turn, builds the Black economy.

This monopolization of the cosmetic industry has made it easy for companies to capitalize on the fact that many Black women feel they have no other choice but to use commercial products. This is true for many women everywhere. Because these industries are regarded as one of the only resources for beautification, women are much more likely to overlook ingredients if there is no alternatives to buy from. Often times, these industries flood beauty supply stores, which are shops primarily for Black hair products in low-income communities. And when all the products on the market have the exact same manufactured ingredients, I believe it is much easier to assume that the ingredients are generally safe. Additionally, it makes it harder for companies who want to provide less toxic, natural products because industrialized chemicals are much cheaper than resources like aloe vera gel or shea butter.[148]

The problem with toxic micro-ingredients is that they are applied directly to the skin, which is permeable and able to absorb chemicals directly after exposure. The more disturbing aspect of toxic chemical consumption is that the toxic-containing cosmetics we use would be less harmful if we ate them! Because the skin absorbs these chemicals through the skin, they bypass detoxifying liver enzymes and circulate throughout the body within being properly secreted. Our intestines, on the other hand, absorb the chemicals we eat and pass them into the bloodstream,

[147] Clingman, James. "The Future of Black Hair Care Companies." *Sun Reporter*, September 3, 1998.
[148] https://www.organicconsumers.org/old_articles/bodycare/toxic_cosmetics.php

which is then taken to the liver for detoxification.[149] According to a 1978 study presented to Congressional hearings about the chemical NDELA, "the absorption of carcinogen nitrosodiethanolamine (NDELA), was shown to be over 100 times greater when exposure occurred on the skin than through the mouth."[150] Some toxins are absorbed through the skin as easily as NDELA, and about eight hundred of industrial cosmetic chemicals are considered carcinogenic. Many of these ingredients are hidden or are ingredients hard to pronounce and something an average consumer more than likely would not know about. There is also an ingredient called 1,4 dioxane that is located in cosmetic products for infants, which was not initially placed in the formula but generated as a result of the manufacturing process. 1,4 dioxane readily penetrates the skin and is a human carcinogen as confirmed by the Environmental Protection Agency.[151]

Some carcinogens are constituted as carcinogens in their manufactured state, while others are "precursors" to carcinogens and can break down over certain periods of time to release carcinogens. Some of those carcinogens include DEA, formaldehyde, lead, mineral oils, coal tar dyes (Green 5, Blue 2), talc, and titanium dioxide. The carcinogenic precursors include butane, DEA, arsenic, petroleum, lanolin, and phenol octoxynols. Other chemicals are not carcinogenic, but can cause other physiological dysfunctions.[152] Chemicals that imitate the effects of "natural hormones produced by the body's endocrine system" such as estrogren-mimickers

[149] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald. *Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009.
[150] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald. *Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009.
[151] http://www.epa.gov/ttnatw01/hlthef/dioxane.html
[152] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald. *Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009.

include parabens, Disodium EDTA, plasticizers, phthalates, and certain chemicals in sunscreens such as homosalate and oxybenzone. There is also a list of chemicals provided by the Environmental Working Group's Cosmetic Database that increase the body's ability to absorb chemicals in products, which also include DEA, sodium lauryl sulfate, citric acid, salicylic acid, and octyl-methoxycinnamate.[153] The skin is permeable and not a barrier to many of the chemicals listed. But even more alarming is that the substances making these toxins more easily absorbed by our skin are in a wide range of cosmetic products.[154] The chemicals mentioned throughout the paper are inherently harmful, but are even more dangerous because of these absorption promoters like sodium lauryl sulfate, a common ingredient used in women's shampoos and laundry detergents.

Hair Relaxers and Keratin Hair Treatments: A Brief History and Overview

The main ingredients in most hair relaxer formulas consist of sodium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, guanidine carbonate, guanidine hydroxide, thioglycolic acid and lithium hydroxide. [155] Sodium hydroxide was demonstrated in the documentary Good Hair as being able to eat through raw chicken skin with a single drop of the substance. In the movie, the chemist and Chris Rock wore glove and facemasks to simply protect themselves from the fumes of sodium hydroxide since they can corrode the lungs through extensive breathing.[156] Imagine a hair stylist who is in contact with sodium hydroxide fumes everyday for long hours or a

[153] http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/
[154] http://alttox.org/mapp/toxicity-endpoints-tests/dermal-penetration/
[155] http://www.africaontheblog.com/dying-for-straight-hair-the-danger-of-relaxers-for-african-women/
[156] *Good Hair*. Lionsgate, 2010. Film.

client who is in contact with sodium hydroxide fumes twice a week for an entire day. These are the circumstances for Black women who either work in beauty salons or visit the hair shop on a regular basis for hair treatments. Black girls as young as three years old come into beauty salons to get "kiddie" hair relaxers. When they do so, they expose their developing lungs to these fumes . Because hair relaxer ingredients are highly acidic, neutralizing shampoo must be applied to the hair and scalp after using these chemicals. Lye-based relaxers are the most acidic hair formulas and are considered caustic because of their high acidity. The acid works to break the protein bonds of the hair, which ultimately weaken the structure of the hair and allow for it to be straightened and stay straightened much more easily.[157] Most of the time, relaxers are followed up with extreme heat from the blow-drying process to the flat-ironing process, which can use heat ranging from 184 to 400 degrees. This further breaks down the protein of the hair and aids in hair breakage and balding issues.

The boom of 'no-lye' relaxers was popular in the 1940s and lead consumers to believe that chemicals in hair relaxing products were much safer, but in reality, according to biologist Lark Lambert of the FDA, still contained caustic ingredients.[158] These relaxers contain ingredients such as quinidine hydroxide, which is a "mixture of calcium hydroxide and guanidine carbonate."[159] But both these relaxers have received complaints from consumers about their hair falling out, the scalp being irritated, and in extreme cases, developing lesions on the scalp.

[157] http://beautysupply.about.com/od/chemicalhairtreatments/a/Hair-Relaxer-Where-Did-It-Come-From-And-How-Does-It-Work.htm
[158] http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~nshah/cosmetics/relaxers-healtheffects.html
[159] http://lesstoxicguide.ca/index.asp?fetch=personal#hcare

Equally, if not more alarming, chemical hair straighteners also can contain formaldehyde, which is a known human carcinogen.[160]

Multiple studies have been conducted on adverse effects concerning hair care products amongst Black women from all around the country and abroad. Another topic surrounding hair care relaxers is its effect on the development of uterine fibroids in Black women. Uterine fibroids are benign tumors in the myometrium, which is responsive to estrogen and progesterone hormones. Lauren Wise et al conducted a study in March of 2012 on hair relaxers' potential contribution to the higher incidence of fibroids in Black women than in white women. She and her team sampled 23, 580 Black pre-menopausal women. What this study emphasized, though, is the use of perfume or aromatic substances in popular hair relaxers, which often contain estrogen-mimicking hormones such as phlathates, contained in 100% of popular commercial fragrances tested in 2002. According to the 2012 study, most hair relaxer labeling directly contain phlathates as one of the ingredients.[161] Phlathates can easily be absorbed through the skin and by inhaling, which is likely given the context in which hair relaxers are used. Hair relaxers are one of the top causes of baldness, scalp irritations, lesions, burns and alopecia for Black women.[162] Lesions and burns on the scalp expose the epidermis and beyond, making it much easier for any toxic chemicals to enter the body. This is why chemical relaxers are not just a danger to the first layer of our skin. Many women have experienced the burning sensation on the scalp that often occurs with relaxer use and is an early

[160] http://www.ewg.org/hair-straighteners/our-report/how-to-get-straight-hair-whats-the-best-option/
[161] Wise, L. A., J. R. Palmer, D. Reich, Y. C. Cozier, and L. Rosenberg. "Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women." *American Journal of Epidemiology*: 432-40.
[162] http://www.essence.com/2014/05/08/three-reasons-why-black-women-are-losing-hair/

indicator of a burn or lesion starting to develop. The Wise et al study concluded that the "duration of use and number of burns were also positively associated with risk of uterine leiomyomata, but there was no clear dose-response relation."[163] And also that they "observed increased risks of uterine leiomyoma in association with ever use of hair relaxers, duration of use, frequency of use, and total number of burns experienced during use."[164]

In another study published in 2010 by Lopez-Corrillo et al, women in Northern Mexico who used commercial cosmetic brands on a daily basis were found to have higher concentrations of phthalates in their urine. This study shows that users versus "non-users" of "body lotion and deodorant showed significantly higher urinary concentrations of some DEHP metabolites, users of anti aging facial cream showed higher concentrations of MEP, MBP, MCPP, and perfume users had increased concentration of MiBP." [165]All these chemicals have positive correlations to uterine leiomuomata (fibroids) according to a study done by Anderson H et al.[166]

Once the correlation between uterine fibroids and hair relaxers became publicly available, many Black hair blogs including Curly Nikki and Black Girl With Long Hair made posts about the details of this study for their followers to read about.[167]

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[163] Wise, L. A., J. R. Palmer, D. Reich, Y. C. Cozier, and L. Rosenberg. "Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women." *American Journal of Epidemiology*: 432-40.
[164] Wise, L. A., J. R. Palmer, D. Reich, Y. C. Cozier, and L. Rosenberg. "Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women." *American Journal of Epidemiology*: 432-40.
[165] Romero-Franco, Michelle, Raúl U. Hernández-Ramírez, Antonia M. Calafat, Mariano E. Cebrián, Larry L. Needham, Susan Teitelbaum, Mary S. Wolff, and Lizbeth López-Carrillo. "Personal Care Product Use and Urinary Levels of Phthalate Metabolites in Mexican Women." *Environment International*: 867-71.
[166] Lambertino, Anissa, Mary Turyk, Henry Anderson, Sally Freels, and Victoria Persky. "Uterine Leiomyomata in a Cohort of Great Lakes Sport Fish Consumers." *Environmental Research*: 565-72.
[167] I will include the blog posts of these sites in my Appendix.

Keratin-Based Hair Treatment

Keratin-based hair treatments are similar to hair relaxers because they break down the protein of hair follicles to make the straightening process afterwards easier for beauticians. These have recently emerged in the Black hair community as an alternative to hair relaxers and said to be more affective than relaxers as well. Keratin treatments work to make natural hair more resistant to water and retaining its straightness for up to three or more months. A 2013 study done in South Africa surveyed seven major brand keratin-treatment companies and found that not only had five of the seven companies contained formaldehyde within their formulas after being labeled formaldehyde-free, but also contained much more than the amount considered safe for consumers. Six of those brands contained formaldehyde "5 times higher than the recommended level."[168] This is true for the United States as well. The Environmental Working Group invested 16 companies that make hair-straightening products with hidden formaldehyde. Companies such as Brazilian Blowout, Keratin Express, KeraGreen, and Tahe claim to have little to know formaldehyde in their formulas, but have amounts that "exceed safety limits set by the Cosmetic Ingredient Review, an industry safety panel."[169] This was the care for all 16 companies. Formaldehyde is a carcinogen in its gaseous state, which it likely is in when the hairstyling process includes using extreme heat on the heat. Companies such as Palmer's have labeled certain lotions as coconut oil cream, but if you look

[168] Maneli, Mbulelo H., Peter Smith, and Nonhlanhla P. Khumalo. "Elevated Formaldehyde Concentration in "Brazilian Keratin Type" Hair-straightening Products: A cross-sectional Study." *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*: 276-80.
[169] http://www.ewg.org/hair-straighteners/our-report/hair-straighteners-that-hide-formaldehyde/

closely at the label, the very last ingredient is coconut oil and the first ingredient listed is mineral oil or petroleum gel. Mineral oil and petroleum have both been labeled as carcinogenic by toxic databases.[170]

Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals

Endocrine disrupters or mimickers have been used in large cosmetic brands for more than thirty years. The most common EDCs are chemically manufactured parabens, which include: methylparabens, propylparabens, and butylparabens. Parabens are used as a preservative, which extend the shelf life of lipsticks, body lotions, facial creams and other personal care products.[171] The use of hormone-disrupting chemicals has been shown to cause adverse health effects for women's reproductive health.[172]

The chemical DES (diethylstilbestrol), for example, was shown to cause rare cervical cancers in the unborn daughters of pregnant women who took this drug during their pregnancy terms to prevent miscarriages. In a publication, "The effects of exogenous female hormones on the fetus" published in 1979, they clearly state how DES affects women and their unborn children: "The lessons learned from 40 years of DES research are that the female fetus is susceptible to environmentally induced reproductive abnormalities, that gonadal organogenesis is sensitive to

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[170] https://www.organicconsumers.org/old_articles/bodycare/toxic_cosmetics.php
[171] Epstein, Samuel S., and Randall Fitzgerald. *Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal-care Products Endanger Your Health, and What You Can Do about It*. Dallas, TX: Benbella, 2009.
[172]Edocrine Disrupters. (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2014, from http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/endocrine/
Koniecki, Diane, Rong Wang, Richard P. Moody, and Jiping Zhu. "Phthalates in Cosmetic and Personal Care Products: Concentrations and Possible Dermal Exposure." *Environmental Research*: 329-36.

synthetic hormones during a critical fetal exposure window, that reproductive diseases may not appear until decades after exposures, and that many female reproductive disorders may co-occur.[173] This means that cosmetic toxins may not be noticeable until years after exposure, when preventative measures are too late. This, to me, would call for stronger regulations of cosmetics. If scientists have proven that disorders may not occur until long after usage, then why is one of the regulations of the FDA for cosmetics that chemicals will not be prohibited until they display serious side effects?

Pre-Mature Puberty in Young African American Girls

In an article by Afro State of Mind, a natural hair blog, "Are Relaxers As Dangerous Cigarettes?" the blogger discusses how hair relaxers are associated with premature menstruation in young Black girls.[174] Endocrine-disrupting chemicals do not just affect the reproductive systems of older women. Research has found that Black girls as early as one year old who are exposed to hair oils and creams containing EDCs are more likely to develop their periods at an early age. Tiwary completed a study on the early sexual development of young Black girls and its association with hair styling products.[175] According to Herman-Giddens et al, the premature breast development of African American children is five times higher than white children. Black eight-year-old girls are more than three times likely to

[173] Shapiro, S. (1979). The effects of exogenous female hormones on the fetus. *Epidemiologic Reviews, 1*, 110-23.
[174] Afrostateofmind.com
Favors, L. (n.d.). Are Hair Relaxers As Dangerous As Cigarettes? Retrieved December 4, 2014, from http://www.afrostateofmind.com/are-relaxers-as-dangerous-as-cigarettes/
[175] Tiwary, C. (1998). Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen-or Placenta-Containing Hair Products. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 733-739.

show signs of puberty than white eight-year-old girls.[176] Additionally, "*When Smoke Ran Like Water*" by Devra Davis mentions that African American women are more genetically similar to American white women than Africans from Africa. This means the drastic difference in premature development is not purely genetically driven, if at all. In Tiwary et al's study, four African American girls were monitored while using hair oils and creams containing estrogen, and developed breasts, pubic hair, or both after using these items for "varying periods" of time.[177] After discontinuing the use of these products, the young girls "showed regression of sexual characteristics."[178] In one of the patients, "Breast development was noted 2 years after [estrogen-containing] product use. The girl was advised to discontinue the use of the estrogen-containing hair preparation, and 1 month later, a decrease in the breast sized was noted."[179] Tiwary found this regression of puberty-indicating developments to be the case in all of the girls participating in the study. In his conclusions, he notes also that about 64 percent of African American women use hormone or placenta containing products than white women at 7 percent.[180]

[176] Davis, D. (2002). *When smoke ran like water: Tales of environmental deception and the battle against pollution*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
[177] Tiwary, C. (1998). Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen-or Placenta-Containing Hair Products. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 733-739.
[178] Tiwary, C. (1998). Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen-or Placenta-Containing Hair Products. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 733-739.
[179] Tiwary, C. (1998). Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen-or Placenta-Containing Hair Products. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 733-739.
[180] Tiwary, C. (1998). Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen-or Placenta-Containing Hair Products. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 733-739.

Conclusions

Many chemicals prevalent in the cosmetic care industry are toxic and are thus dangerous to public health. These are products can easily be purchased by anyone seeking to "enhance" their beauty. These products are so loosely regulated that some of the products contain chemicals that have already been banned or warned against by the Environmental Protection Agency. This is a concern for all women who regularly use commercial body and face cosmetics, and it is representative of the lack of incentive for certain cosmetic companies to come out and warn women of their controversial products. Industries have no incentive to warn women of these potential hazards because then they would make no money. It would give other companies with higher ethical and moral company values a chance to have a share of this multi-billion dollar industry. So, if these companies will not inform their customers then who will? The natural hair movement has not only identified this need, but it has made it a necessary component of its mission to promote natural hair care across the globe. Studies presented in this chapter demonstrate that the cosmetic industry presents a public health: the prevalence of uterine fibroids, the early onset of puberty in young Black children, rare cervical cancers, and skin disorders such as psoriasis and lesions are all some of the affects of these toxics. More toxic-containing cosmetics have been and still are marketed disproportionately towards Blacks in the United States. Toxic dumps are sitting in

our bathroom cabinets and environmentalists need to take a look at this environmental justice issue so close that we put it on our bodies every single day.

I believe, though, that various members of the natural hair movement have done an excellent job at trying to increase literacy around cosmetics by dedicated their blog posts to them and even speaking out against ingredients they know are harmful to their followers. Chapter four will examine natural hair blogs and other social media platforms, and present interviews conducted with some of the participants of the natural hair movement showing how the natural hair movement has been educational for them.

Chapter 4: The Natural Movement and Its Role for Black Women

During my interviews over the summer, I was seeking answers that could possibly validate how I personally felt about the natural hair movement. For some time, I thought about my environmental analysis major and how I believed the natural hair movement could be included in the dialogue of environmental analysis at the Claremont Colleges. The information I discovered from Chapter Three not only made me realize that cosmetics, including hair products, can be extremely toxic, but also that cosmetic toxins are a part of an environmental health issue. Environmental education is currently defined by the North American Association for Environmental Education as "teach[ing] children and adults how to learn about and investigate their environment, and to make informed decisions about how they can

take care of it."[181] Environmental education, for me, can also include information on how to be more aware of the many toxins present in our lived environment. If the World Health does indeed state that environmental health includes all the physical, chemical and biological factors in the lived environment affecting human health, then certainly toxins in our cosmetics would fall under this category. And if the natural hair movement teaches women, to a certain degree, about cosmetic toxins in commercial products, and displayed in my interview, then women following these blogs and websites are being educated in an informal, but effective manner. Although the intention of the natural hair movement was not to provided environmental education, specifically, but has done so because the hairstyling of African American women is an environmental and public health issue.

The natural hair movement first began in the 1960s when Black men and women chose to wear their hair in Afros to express Black solidarity in a time of racial discrimination and hate crimes. Angela Davis, a former member of the Black Panther party, was notorious for wearing her hair in an Afro to express her solidarity. Now, natural hair blogs do sometimes focus on the political implications of wearing their hair naturally, but seem to be more focused on providing women the information they need to wear their hair naturally and healthily.

> Joyce: I know that a lot of natural blogs started coming out and then Target started selling natural hair products. Did you engage in that movement more

[181] http://www.naaee.net/what-is-ee

because it was popular or was it kind of the same for you because you've always been natural?

Samantha: I think I engaged in it more not necessarily because it was popular but because it was popular, it made it easy. For me it was always an issue of trying to find hair products that were you know, and finding curly hair products amongst European aesthetic was hard to find for me because even their kind of curly hair was not my kind of curly hair. When I went straight into trying to go into the beauty supply store is on the other end, the olive oil and you know, if very heavy for my hair, you know, and if I had to categorize my hair it would be multi-racial. Because its uncharacteristic of the two, you've got permed hair and really thick hair, you know the curly hair is in between, there was no in between for me. When it started getting popular you've got more and more people you know either with curly hair who are wearing it curly or people who have been straightening their hair that actually wearing it kinky and curly now or they're trying to get it to be curly. So there's this wide array of hair textures now and I have more of an opportunity to go out to buy and try these new things. Cause I was always tryna find new things, but it was not necessarily a natural hair thing. It was tryna find something that worked for me cause there wasn't really a space that fit for me and I was really tired of wearing my hair straight all the time. So a lot of times I just wore my hair straight because there weren't products available or advice I could seek out because nobody had my kind of hair. So

when you've got YouTube videos popping out and these people doing braid outs and twist outs, doing conditioning treatments and all these things that I would have never known because my mother also has a different hair texture than me, she wears her hair straight most of the time because its almost straight anyway. And its only curly in the back. So because she doesn't wear her hair curly we both are still sort of just figuring it out. Because her hair is still curly too but she has to wear it straight cause its straight in the front and there just wasn't a space for us and there wasn't anyone I could really seek advice from because the people I knew with curly hair had much thinner hair and you know were Puerto Rican or they were Mexican or they were Irish and their hair textures just didn't match mine. And if they were black, their hair was straight, and didn't know anything about it. So now we've got all these blogs popping up. I guess in hindsight I really did delve into it more because it was a space I had been looking for that was never there. And I don't have the ingenuity to sit and figure out shea butter and coconut oil, I would just buy it. And now I can. And I was sort of like irritated because everyone's like oh this natural hair movement and I'm sort of like this is sort of how I've always been living. But in hindsight I've definitely benefitted from everyone jumping on the wagon because that space that I had been looking for is finally there now.[182]

[182] Joyce Nimocks Appendix

My interview with Samantha speaks precisely to how the natural hair movement has given women a platform to talk about their hair care. Before, she did not feel as if there was a space to be natural and surrounded by other women who looked like her and were also natural. The natural hair movement, in this way, has addressed the social exclusion implicated within different hairstyles and has made it so that people can feel comfortable and prepared to wear a natural style. Additionally, her words emphasize that the natural hair movement is not just about hair. From what Samantha conveyed to me in this interview, she was always health conscious, but did not feel there was a space in the Black community to talk about an overall health-conscious lifestyle as well as hair.

_____One woman who works a local health food store near my home spoke about her experience being natural and her words spoke volumes about the intersectionality of this movement and how the natural hair is not just about hair. Health has been implicated in four of my interviews, including this one:

> J: How long have you been natural?
>
> H: Since 1970.
>
> J: What prompted you to do this?
>
> H: There was a gentleman, a professor at the University of Chicago, and he was talking about macrobiotics and what that was and a few of us high school students at the time, we were listening. He gifted me a book called Macrobiotics. So the book talks about how we eat so badly, that we are extremely ill and we have a lot of conditions like cancer and diabetes and

high blood pressure out of that. So I learned a lot about how to eat to balance myself and it was absolutely important. And I did a research paper on blood work and urinary analysis, and it was addictive to my mind. So just being that way and being that imbalanced was just an amazing experience. And I became many different versions of a vegetarian and altered my diet in many different ways. I made my rounds up and down the east coast, moved back from Boston and learned about raw food there. And I will tell you when I went to D.C. we actually had someone that was growing wheatgrass. The flax, after he cut the grass down, I was composting in my garden so then I moved to Boston and then I joined a health institute that was an all raw, rejuvenation institute and learned how to grow wheatgrass and grow sprouts and everything. And then in the 90s it became popular again and people started asking me to teach raw food classes so I've looked through a lot of different diet restraints.[183]

At this point in the conversation, I noticed that she did not explicitly state how these events in her life related to her going natural. She focused on how her decision to eat healthily coincided with this, very subconsciously it seemed. This point was important because it suggested that the natural hair movement has been more than about *just* hair for her.

J: So what diet are you on now?

[183] Joyce Nimocks Appendix

H: I eat clean.

J: And when I asked you about your natural hair, you started talking about all of these things…about nutrients and taking care of your body. So when you started…was it a simultaneous thing when you started wearing your hair natural?

H: No. It was the deficiencies that came about with lack of proteins. My hair really got fragile and thin… So it was a time when I had to really take a look at nutritional deficiencies. So I actually rescued my hair from falling out and capturing it and letting go of the things that were damaging it. You really have to start from within because not enough minerals. That occurred from years of not eating dense proteins and my hydrochloric protein went down down down.

J: Does anyone in your family….well obviously your granddaughter, but does anyone else in your family wear their hair naturally?

H: Oh yeah both my daughters.

J: Did you kind of influence that?

H: They grew up in a health food store. I raised them that way. In fact, my granddaughter, until just a few months ago, her father decided he wanted her

to straighten her hair for his wedding, but up until that we never straightened her hair.

J: You didn't use the chemicals did you?

H: Oh no. Just the um blow dryer. And you see how healthy her hair. We never clog it. And the other thing is we never strip it.
The tighter the curl, the finer the hair follicle is.[184]

When she says that he children grew up in a health food store, she again, is implying that natural hair is linked to natural living in general. Each time I spoke with her about deciding to go natural, she kept repeating that she ate healthily and was aware of her physical health. The natural hair movement is then not just about hair styling. For women like the health store worker, natural hair is just very much another part of taking care of your body and overall caring for yourself. I also conducted an interview with founder and CEO, Karen, of Karen's Body Beautiful who speaks to the intersectionality of hair and health, as well.

[184] Joyce Nimocks'Appendix

An Interview with Karen





[185]

K: At first I wasn't paying attention to the products that I was using when I first went natural and I first transitioned fourteen years ago, because I was using whatever was in the beauty supply store and what I was using when I has a perm. So now, as I'm natural, these products aren't working because your hair needs are different when you're natural versus relaxed. You need more moisture, you need to be able to detangle your hair, and so on and so forth and none of those products allowed me to do either of those things. So in my diet, I was paying attention to what I was eating, I was reading ingredients and it took me forever to buy anything in the supermarket because I wouldn't buy anything without examining what was in it in terms of the ingredients. And I chose to do the same in my hair care products.

[185] "Selfie" taken and sent to me by Karen; Karen's Body Beautiful Website

There's a laundry list of chemicals; there must be a correlation between these chemicals and my hair problems and there was. So I'm doing research on the ingredients and finding out that a lot of the ingredients make your hair drier and are toxic, they cause cancer, they are toxic and I was like this is crazy, I'm going to fix this.

J: When you went about researching ingredients and hair care products, what was your biggest tool in terms of research? Did you mostly use google, did you mostly use YouTube was it just like online research?

K: It was online research. Everything was just a googling, google fest. I spent a lot of time researching online.

J: Why do you think that the natural hair movement seemed to have prompted this desire or motivation to be educated about the ingredients in our hair care products but also about the ingredients in the food we eat as well?

K: That's a good question. I think it's a subconscious decision that I am going to stop processing my hair and people come to the realization that relaxers do damage your hair inherently. That's what they do. And so when you decide to stop processing your hair, you're like I've got to take care of my hair, this is the hair that's growing out of my scalp, its very fragile. Um I had to go through additional lengths to take care of it so its more work its more effort, I'm not going to damage it. So I think it

kind of just transfers over because if you are gonna take care of your hair, and we know as Black women our hair is our crown and glory, I think it means more to us than other people means to them. And so its just this very conscious I'm gonna take care of my hair, hey maybe I should think about other areas of my life, my diet, my entire beauty regime and then you have brands like myself, who are using natural ingredients and we as consumers know this is a very simple product. If you turn it around and you can pronounce it, you know what it is, you can get it at the health food store, there is a chance that it is going to be healthier for you. And improve the quality of your hair care regime and the quality of your hair. So I think it all kind of makes sense. It makes sense that if you are going to take better care of you hair you might think about taking better care of your entire body, your lifestyle, your body, you know.[186]

Karen highlights that the term "going natural" has many meanings from her interview. For some women, "going natural" has everything to do with how your hair looks. If you wear a fro or your hair predominantly curly, even if you use "non-natural" products then some people will define you as a "natural" because of your hair's physical appearance. In another light, which I think is more in alignment with where the movement has gone in the past year or so, "going natural" is now both intentionally and unintentionally in congruence with living a natural lifestyle.[187] For both Karen, wearing her hair naturally prompted her to start being more conscious

[186] Joyce Nimocks Appendix
[187] Going natural means that you were once using heat, chemicals or both to straighten your curly hair, but are now wearing your hair in its natural state.

of her holistic health. While the health store worker, on the other hand, went natural as a result of beginning to live a healthy lifestyle.

Erica, a chemist and owner of Sister Scientist, thinks the same:

Erica: I have interacted with women who say 'oh no, chemicals don't touch this hair. But then you see them scarfing down a burger that has been preserved in the some of the things people use to preserve products.' I am not condemning either one its just a matter of being educated about what you're willing to accept in your lifestyle and then stick to it and use your purchasing power to support the organizations or companies that make products that cater to your standard. Um, but what gets a little irritating to me is that they just don't know they're not educated and they are repeating what someone else said who repeated what somebody else said that came from a source that was completely wrong. I think us as communities need to get more educated about hair products and not just hair products not just skin products but the products in general. Like we have a lot of power in this economy and we need to utilize and utilize our voices and tell those companies what we want. So as a chemist, when I'm hired by a company to develop a product for a consumer who looks like you, I need to know want and what you're standard is. Because its my job to go in and develop products that say this meets your standard and so that you know it is what it is and you're buying what they say it is.[188]

[188] Joyce Nimocks'Appendix

Once again, the natural hair movement is not just about hair, but about how Black women are educating themselves, as well.

Francheska Khalo Medina of HeyFranHey

Francheska Khalo was one of the first women I followed when I started my natural hair journey. What intrigued me about her website, HeyFranHey.com, was that she not only included advice on natural hair maintenance, but also spoke a lot on her site about natural remedies for ailments such as menstrual cramps or migraines. She also had sections where she would include natural cosmetic recipes, which I was drawn to because of my own family's involvement with natural cosmetics. Her site provides smoothie recipes, natural acne remedies and all sorts of information around Black women taking care of themselves. Even more importantly, she provides ways for her followers to attain literacy of cosmetic labeling, food labeling, the science of Black hair, and everything that is relevant so that people looking at her blog are not just mindlessly following a stream of information.

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Below, I include a response from one of her followers, outside of my interviewees, who also showcases how natural hair has intersected with all aspects of her life and not just hair.

"I LOVE FRANCHESKA. SHE HAS LITERALLY CHANGED MY LIFE AFTER WATCHING HER ON YOU TUBE. I CHANGED ALOT ABOUT MYSELF FROM MY NATURAL HAIR PRODUCTS, BODY PRODUCTS TO THE FOOD I EAT. I'M NOT VEGAN BUT I CUT ALOT OF MEAT OUT.. EXERCISE IS LESS BORING AFTER VIEWING HER BLOG!"[190]

Oyin Handmade

Oyin Handmade was a company I chose to interview because of their pledge to bringing all natural, nourishing, and non-toxic hair and body products to the

[189] A picture of Francheska and me at a natural beauty event in Chicago, July of 2014
[190] http://www.kisforkinky.com/francheska-of-hey-fran-hey-on-fitness-and-health/

natural hair ago some years ago. Their Hair Dew, for example, consists mainly of castor oil, olive oil, aloe vera leaf juice, and behentrimonium methosulfate. The last ingredient was the only one I was not familiar with, but the cosmetic working group's database lists it as naturally derived from rapeseed oil and completely safe to use. Another popular ingredient, the Frank Juice, is made of an aqueous infusion of shavegrass leaf, lavender buds, chamomile flower, red rose petals, organic flax seeds, aloe leaf juice, vegetable glycerin, lavender oil, and citric acid. All of the products listed on their site are natural , herbal, easy to pronounce and approved by the cosmetic working group.

In addition to having a natural line of hair products, Oyin also has multiple social media sites that include information about their products, Black men and women's hair styles, fashion, and other popular culture topics. Below are a few images from their blog:





[191]

In order to conduct the interview, I e-mailed the co-owner of the Oyin Handmade Company my interview questions and she responded with her thoughts below. I only included a portion of the questions.[192]

Why did you make the conscious decision not to include some of the commercial preservatives and other chemical ingredients some larger companies use in their hair care products?

Our products are full of many food grade & natural ingredients - we feel it's important to "feed" the skin and hair with ingredients that are healthy, whole, and nutritious. Nutritious oils have components, which can do a host of amazing things: mimic our skin's natural oils, penetrate the hair shaft to provide strength, provide a measure of natural sun protection, or a host of other benefits. We do use preservatives in those products, which need them -- a good rule to keep in mind is

[191] All Pictures on this page From Oyin Handmade Website
[192] Because I interviewed with businesswomen, many of them tried to promote their companies, which meant some of the interviews were deleted.

that if oil and water are mixed, the product needs a wide-spectrum cosmetic preservative to protect against bacteria, yeasts, and molds. This is very important b/c it keeps the goodies safe on the shelf. The preservative we use is approved worldwide and is one of the gentlest and most effective we could find… think it's great that science and nature can work together in this way to keep us healthy and happy!

This relates to question 3, but how did you learn about the ingredients you currently use in your products and their effectiveness for healthy hair care? From home? Social media networks? The hair care industry?

I was raised using pure olive oil or coconut oil as my only body moisturizers, so i always knew that things from the kitchen could do double-duty as personal care. I think someone gave me a 'make your own spa treatments!' book as a gift once, and this opened my eyes to some of the basics of mixing, melting, and simple formulating. Social media didn't exist yet as such -- it was web 1.0 at the time, lol -- but the natural hair community did thrive on bulletin board and discussion sites like nappturality.com and naturallycurly.com -- and members of these sites did exchange recipes and tips; there was also a lot of information about ingredients and formulary available at the supply sites for soapmaking and toiletry hobbyists… places that sell ingredients, oils, and containers. creating the products was a LOT of fun. I still do the

new product development and that creative trial and error is my joy![193]

As women began to embark on their natural hair journeys, as displayed here, they were utilizing social media to gather information from each other. Women having the internet at their disposal made it much easier for both women, Karen and the co-owner of Oyin Handmade, to research and exchange information to take care of both the skin and the rest of their bodies. It is important emphasize that women participating, as shown in these interviews, are not just taking care of their hair, but learning so many other types of information in the process. This is how the natural hair movement serves as a platform for environmental education: by teaching women about not just toxins in our lived environments that we are exposed to, but also how to live more healthy and sustainable lives in terms of our cosmetics. It would not be educational if women simply stated that they had a place to look at each other's hair and show off hairstyles. Yes, it would be entertaining, but not educational. The fact that the majority of my interviewees have said that they are much more health conscious as well as hair conscious speaks to the educational and public health implications of this movement. Participants of the natural hair movement are responding to the toxic ingredients specifically in their products as well as the other health problems such as obesity that are the realities for many Black women. They are responding by using the avenues of natural hair platforms to educate and empower followers of these natural hair sites and companies.

[193] Joyce Nimocks Appendix

Final Thoughts: What Are The Next Steps?

My question for the conclusion of this thesis is: How will the natural hair movement affect women in the future? When people first think of my topic, no one would expect that hair care had anything to do with environmental analysis or public health. But in fact, my research shows that hair care products contain very toxic chemicals that can be detrimental to our health. I also found that certain products containing these toxins are only exposed to Black women. Hair relaxers, specifically, are only targeted to a Black audience. Because of Euro-centric beauty aesthetics deeply ingrained in this country, Black women have felt the need to use hair relaxers to assimilate to beauty culture in the United States and abroad. Companies feed off of these aesthetics that stem from the negative portrayal of Black women in order to sell toxic products to their consumers. Although there are toxins in cosmetics advertised to many women of all shades, there are certain health risks associated with those products geared specifically to Black women including uterine fibroids and premature puberty, which have both been explored in this thesis.

Natural hair blogs and websites have done an excellent job mixing education and entertainment into their social media sites. But this information should not be limited to Black women who are natural. It is great that women participating in the natural hair movement are now informed and can make healthy decisions throughout their lives. That information, though, should be marketed to all Black women because toxins in hair cosmetics are still on the shelves at our local beauty supply stores. Adverse health affects stemming from hair cosmetics geared towards

Black women is a social justice issue and participants in the natural hair movement should market their sites to women who have chemically relaxed hair.

The New America Media website highlights in 2011 a health and wellness advocacy group in Los Angeles, Black Women for Wellness, who have put together a 28-page booklet titled "Black Going Green".[194] The executive director of Black Women for Wellness, Jan Robinson-Flint, says the group surveyed beauty salons for the products they used regularly "…and then looked at the impact of those chemicals because they're toxins on our health and well-being. Anytime you look at any statistics for Black women, you'll find that we are at the top."[195] The Black Women for Wellness group demonstrates how this is not only a health issue, but a social justice issue as well. And by providing a booklet for women to be further educated on this matter, they demonstrate ways this issue can be addressed.

I am in the beginning stages of applying for a Napier Fellowship through the Claremont Colleges and pushing a plan to bring cosmetic workshops to the South Side of Chicago, my hometown. I am planning to bring a series of workshops to women from mixed-income communities that will focus on cosmetic label literacy, the potential health risks associated with products such as hair relaxers, and what ingredients women can use to make their own cosmetic products. I also propose to use funds to seeds of plants that have healthy aromatic properties such as lavender and lemongrass, so that women will not have to resort to synthetic fragrances often containing estrogen-mimicking hormones. Also, I will encourage the elders to come and share their cosmetic regimes that do not include industrial cosmetics with the

[194] http://newamericamedia.org/2012/02/skin-deep-in-more-ways-than-one.php
[195] http://newamericamedia.org/2012/02/skin-deep-in-more-ways-than-one.php

younger folks. I would like to see this project turn into a source for all women concerned about their hair care to access and utilize for the future. This source would take the form of a blog or website, and for people who do not have access to the internet, monthly meetings would be held to check in with community members and their concerns with cosmetics. Grassroots, community-based based projects such as the one I propose for the Napier are what I hope to see as part of the future of environmental justice and educational programs.

Acknowledgements

I would like to use this section of my thesis to thank all of my thesis readers for pushing me to think critically about my work and motivating me to keep pushing when I was doubtful of my capabilities. Thank you Char, Rick and Professor Kassam. Equally as important have been my support system from the beginning of my college career: Debra Bryant, Marlon Nimocks, Tanya Hines, Grandma Joyce Nimocks, Rudolph Nimocks, Giancarlo Danno, Lisa Alvarez, Teara, King, Rex, and so many others. I have had all the support I could ask for and more and I am truly thankful for you all.

The Natural Hair Movement As A Platform For Environmental Education Appendix

The purpose of this appendix is to provide some of the interviews and pictures I did not deem appropriate for the actual thesis. My interviews were are conducted under the permission of my interviewees. Also, some of my interviewees chose to remain anonymous or only referred to on a first name basis, which is why I do not always include their whole names or any other identifiers.

Interview with Durby City Naturals

J: what type of information do you provide for people on the blog?

DCN: Its really kinda of like education but also fricking entertainment because I don't take this stuff to seriously. Grown people can do whatever they want to their hair. I really don't like the fact that people give perms to their children, my momma has a perm, she know that I got a blog, she still gets a perm. What grown people do I don't care. Just as long as you're being informed and you know what you're doing. So I really try and provide information FIRST. To let people know: what stuff is, what is useful, what does it mean, where can it be found? Break those things down. And then the same thing as far as products. Kentucky is not the most jumping spot; so there are products and things like that that we do have trouble finding here. I would like to source them for people; let them know where you can get them from, where you can order them; like for example, I go to places like Whole Foods and they may not carry a product, but if its in their catalog if its at another whole foods, they'll order it for you even if they don't keep it on the shelf.

J: Oh I didn't know that!

D: Exactly. Most people don't know that. You can use any product at whole foods, you can use ninety percent of it and they will take it back no questions asked. So providing with info like that. We've done a lot of collective buying out here. So when people want a product and you know shipping can be very expensive, you can ask who as a group wants this product because you get it at a discounted price. I try to use my blog for good; to bring more natural
I don't care if you are using a product that is a petroleum derivative; that is your product and you can do what you wanna do; as long as you are informed.

J: And how did you learn about…because you said that you don't like to use products that you can't pronounce. How did you learn that those things are not good for your hair?

D: I went to school for engineering; I have a math and science background so chemical things do not scare me or bother me; I have a background that people do not have. I guess I just have more of a background than most people. That's what I'm

into and I like to share information with people. Providing information that I've learned and explaining to people.

J: Overall, how do you think Durby City Naturals contributes to the natural hair movement?

Interview with Tarika of Pursuit of Nappiness Interview

J: In terms of the site, what is your main focus? Can you talk to me a little bit about the topics that you discuss on the blog or what you like to highlight? Is it hair? Is it politics? What are the topics you like to showcase on your site?

T: I like to to showcase how-tos. How to do this, how to do that. And, like also add in here and there people have questions about moisture so I guess just giving advice. And also saying that if you make the decision to go natural, I feel like you'll be happy with the decision and here are some ways to feel your best, feel beautiful. Here are some styles that you can achieve at home that you will like. I also cover some issues of politics. So I might drop something that might not have anything to do with hair, that is outside the context of hair, but its in the context of race and self-care and stuff like that. For example, some time ago Paula Dean made some racist remarks. And everyone talked about how she had called some black people "niggers" and how she degraded us. So some people were saying that "oh we should boycott her" for being so derogatory and so on. So while I believe with all my heart, all of those racist comments were wrong; I think about my followers who are following big names who are disrespecting black women shamelessly calling black women bitches and hos and things like that. So I made a post about Paula Dean saying "nigger" and it being an uproar but Lil Wayne and Rick ross calling women bitches at every chance they can and doing it publicly with no shame and we're silent. No one is saying this is wrong, and that's derogatory. And that whole issue of self love. So when they're talking about our race its not a problem when we add that other identity of being a woman. It's a problem to attack my race, but in hip hop its not a problem to attack my problem. And I was met with so much backlash. I like to cover stuff like that just to get the conversation going.

J: Why do you think a site that focuses on natural hair is a good way to kind of go into other topics of race and gender? Why do you think that natural hair has been a good avenue for people to do that?

D: Because quite simply, like I said before, we are just now learning our hair, and from a young age, that hair is to be presentable in order to be a big girl, in order to be a professional you have to have your hair straight. Well where does that come from? Euro-centric standards of beauty. Natural hair is bigger than just hair. People kind of say that "Oh this is just hair". It's really how you look at yourself, how you love and appreciate yourself, and um, its just an avenue to think about…Repeat the question one more time. All those things are indivisibly linked. When we start talking about issues of race, we get into issues of beauty. The aesthetic of what is

beautiful and what is not and we start talking about physical features. And that is one avenue, one sector of issues of race talking about hair I believe.

J: And maybe this kind of is repetitive, but I just want to know why you think it is that in the natural hair movement a lot of women have just started talking about race issues, gender issues, black politics in America and things like that. Why does it seem like women are more engaged now that it's the natural hair movement.

T: I don't think that's repetitive at all. Women are becoming more engaged now because their eyes have kind of been opened up. And we're having these discussions about, "you know you can wear your hair natural now. Straight is not the most beautiful thing." And people start making connections to what they used to do and what they do now. When I made the decision to go natural, I started looking at different ingredients and I started looking at what I was eating and what I was putting into my body. It was like a snowball effect. I wanted to stop putting chemicals on my head. What am I drinking? What's in this? Is this processed food? UH UN I don't what that anymore. Are those fries? No I don't want that. This fish, was is wild caught or was it farm-raised? Of its farm-raised, I don't want that. I made decisions that all those things add up. If there wasn't this movement, I would be less conscious of how I'm treating my body. Now, I get up and I workout for or five times a week. Really conscious about just my BODY. You know?

J: I feel like its so interesting. I know for me, when I went natural, I started looking at the ingredients and I follow heyfranhey and she puts health tips on there, and I use ACV in my water and I use Black Strap Molasses for my cramps instead of Advil. And I really can't explain why but I think this is the case for many women who decide to go natural.

T: Just getting more in tune with your body. I used to break out all the time on my face. Thought I was breaking out and eating the wrong thing. Anytime I look in the mirror and I had a streak of pimples I said maybe I'll stop eating this chocolate. But since I've gone natural, and it may just be access to the internet, but I would be really concerned about pimples and then I started learning it wasn't because I ate a snickers bar two three weeks ago. It was because my period had come. And for two or three days of the month I get really bad breakouts. And it only happens two or three days before my period. I don't eat red meat, poultry, I eat fish. It makes me think more about stuff.

J: Also, for your followers, what types of questions do you get on a regular basis from people?

T: Questions vary. People are always interested in how to alleviate dryness. That's a question I get all the time. How can I get rid of the dryness. What product is best for this? People are always asking, they wanna know like, what product did you use for this style?

J: Also, in terms of your hair regime and products you use, what resources do you utilize? Do you mostly use YouTube? Are you experimental? What are your go-to resources when it comes to taking care of your hair?

T: So I am not big on YouTube at all. To cut my social media intake down. And this might seem very shallow but…I may have watched about five or YouTube videos in my lifetime. But I am very anal about how people talk about their voices, if you sound a certain way then I'm not about to watch six more minutes of you doing this twistout.

J: Do you think the natural hair movement is here to stay?

T: I think natural hair is here to stay. For me, I'm not going back to natural hair. People got into this whole movement because they wanted to wear their hair the way it grew out of their scalp. But now, its like insta-natural. Now you can just get natural weave. The whole idea was to promote self-love, love what you have and love the way it grows.

Interview with Karen's Body Beautiful

J: How did you go about finding out about these ingredients?

K: Online research. Everything was just a googling google fest.

J: Why do you think that the natural hair movement seemed to have prompted this desire or motivation to be educated about the ingredients in our hair care products but also about the ingredients in the food we eat as well.

K: That's a good question. I think it's a subconscious decision that I am going to stop processing my hair and people come to the realization that relaxers do damage your hair inherently. That's what they do. And so when you decide to stop processing your hair, you're like I've got to take care of my hair, this is the hair that's growing out of my scalp, its very fragile. Um I had to go through additional lengths to take care of it so its more work its more effort, I'm not going to damage it. So I think it kind of just transfers over because if you are gonna take care of your hair, and we know as Black women our hair is our crown and glory, I think it means more to us than other people means to them. And so its just this very conscious I'm gonna take care of my hair, hey maybe I should think about other areas of my life, my diet, my entire beauty regime and then you have brands like myself, who are using natural ingredients and we as consumers know this is a very simple product. If you turn it around and you can pronounce it, you know what it is, you can get it at the health food store, there is a chance that it is going to be healthier for you. And improve the quality of your hair care regime and the quality of your hair. So I think it all kind of makes sense. It makes sense that if you are going to take better care of you hair you

might think about taking better care of your entire body, your lifestyle, your body, you know.

J: Do large companies ever try to pressure you to use other commercial preservatives that might not be that good for you? How do you kind of maintain the integrity while still mass-producing?

K: I never really thought about it because I had my own store and I was perfectly content in my own store and doing well and my customers were happy. Interestingly, they asked nothing, they put no pressure. They literally say, what do you have, what works well for you and thank you very much we will take six of those cases. (Target) What happens is that people confuse small independent brands expansion with changes going into mass. What really happens is that if you are a small independent brand like myself, to expand, you need money. And often investors put in so much mone, essentially they own your brand and make a lot of decisions. And I'll tell you in my own example, so I had a meeting with an investor a potential investor earlier this year, and he start you're doing well your customers love you and you like to use natural ingredients and that's great, however, if you switch out olive oil with some mineral oil, we can save thirty seven cents per unit and I can get my money back x amount of months faster and the customers wont know, they don't pay attention they love you, they'll buy whatever you're selling. And that deal did not happen. And I said this is not gonna work and that's not how I do business. So that's what happens. Its not that retailers are demanding that brands make changes, its that in order to expand you need a a lot of money. It's a very expensive proposition. And then I had another person, these are people who wanted to invest millions of dollars in my company. I mean I could buy a lot of shoes , I could be good; and then I had a meeting with another guy; and he noticed that I didn't make any products that were curl defining, and anything curl-defining is gonna sell because these women want their curls defined. But I was not interested in making a product that doesn't work for the vast majority of people. So from my experience and what I see, most of us have kinjy hair. And obviously there is a wide spectrum but I think the vast majority of the black women who are going natural have kinky hair and if you buy a product that causes curls defining then you are tricking yourself. Could I make a lot of money if I come out with a curl-defining cream? Of course. But I'm not; it's a lie. Why would I do something…of course a lot of people buy it and pray that if they use it enough it will loosen their curl and spend money. But I don't do business like that. I don't mislead people. I don't sell half-truths. I am truthful about what my products will and wont do for some textures.

Natural Hair Public Forum in Chicago

E: I've worked in the industry for over ten years now and I actually grew up working for Soft Sheen. So when the care free curl was out and all that. So I have seen a big cycle of hair trends that have been very involved in black hair care communities. I

feel that the natural hair movement has given us a platform and it's not just about hair, it's deeper than that. It's about women empowering women to love who you are and organically be you. That's why I think there is a lot of staying power with natural hair. However, we as women are very fickle when it comes to our beauty trends. One day, I mean come on now we wearing stuff that we wore in the 80s now, so you know everything has a cycle. And I feel that although I think the natural hair movement is here to stay, I think that there will be variants of how we do it. So, I don't neccesarily think that we're gonna go back to relaxers the way we did in the 90s but I do feel like people will more open to thermally straightening their heads or there might be more products that are catered to thermally straightening your hair so that you can have that versatility. I think that the natural hair movement is here to stay and to some degree but not as we may see it today.

R: Natural hair is definitely here to stay. There wasn't one hairstyle that we could find specifically for braids and because it is here to stay, I wanted to assist those that decided to to wear their hair naturally curly and give them hairstyle inspiration. So we do it on the runway and this past February, we did it with Huetiful. They styled all of the models hair naturally curly. So, that's why I feel like its here to stay and as we continue to transition.

So let me ask you a question: what is the definition of natural hair?

R: It's expanding. I'm not using any type of chemical in my hair I'm wearing it curly or can you have naturally curly straight hair? So it depends on what your definition of natural is.

F: right. And you bring up an interesting point because one thing that I see in natural hair communities is that I feel like there is a lot of , um, whats the best word, I don't want to say discrimination you know Im sure you guys have heard about texture discrimination. I don't know if I would necessarily take it that far but I do feel like theres a lot of um there's different segments in the natural hair community =. And you do have people that say natural means that you do not have any type of chemicals at all which technically is the correct definition, so I have people tell me that I'm not natural because my hair is color-treated. And you know its color treated it does have a chemical but its natural in texture. Some people can be really rigid and im sure you guys have come across those people in the natural hair community like you're only eating natural organic foods and if your're using any product styling product that means youre not natural but I think its to each his own. What do you wanna add to that?

N: let's start here. I like the words that natural hair is here to stay but it never went no where. Ever. Can the church say amen? We follow trends. So when the magazines come out. One year we wanna be straight and look like clair hugstable, the next year we wanna be power to the people. It all depends on your mood. I do wanna say it did become a movement when good hair came out. When that movie came out and the chemist took a pure form of sodium hydroxide and dropped it on aluminum can.

It took everyone into shock. It shocked everyone across the nation. From him showing the weave blowing down the street to this chemical. So people became very conscious about chemicals that they used. They're so conscious now that they are even going to going free. Any product that sits on a shelf has chemicals in it, so we have a lot of chemicals that are good for us just like bacteria. Some bacteria is good and some bacteria is not. So you have chemicals that aren't good for you and they'll harm you or chemicals that are going to harm you. So it's important to pay attention to the scientist because they are the ones that make the products and they know what's in it and what will be the long-term effect. So we're getting away from names, we just need to understand we are willing to accept, what we like, and if you want to wear your natural hair curl pattern that is you. But we gotta get away from ethnicity because you can catch an African American with texture one hair. You can catch a Caucasian with curly textured hair. And lets get away from race. Its all about texture. So natural hair, I don't think it's a trend I think it is something we're embracing.

E: I have interacted with women who say 'oh no, chemicals don't touch this hair. But then you see them scarfing down a burger that has been preserved in the some of the things people use to preserve products.' I am not condemning either one its just a matter of being educated about what you're willing to accept in your lifestyle and then stick to it and use your purchasing power to support the organizations or companies that make products that cater to your standard. Um, but what gets a little irritating to me is that they just don't know they're not educated and they are repeating what someone else said who repeated what somebody else said that came from a source that was completely wrong. I think us as communities need to get more educated about hair products and not just hair products not just skin products but the products in general. Like we have a lot of power in this economy and we need to utilize and utilize our voices and tell those companies what we want. So as a chemist, when I'm hired by a company to develop a product for a consumer who looks like you, I need to know want and what you're standard is. Because its my job to go in and develop products that say this meets your standard and so that you know it is what it is and you're buying what they say it is.

Can you touch on chemicals in products for the shelf life?

So there are definitely products that are I would say more natural more organic and there are ways to preserve natural products but their shelf life is very low. So if someone says that their product is 100 percent organic it should not be able to stay in your house for more than a month or two. So the longer the shelf life, the more chemicals they probably used to preserve it. Because, let's be real, you don't want to put in hand a product and then tomorrow you see some green stuff floating around in it. But they need some type of acidity or pH balance to preserve it in order to prevent it from happening. So we can't go too organic in order to actually buy products that will sit on the shelf, the way our economy works but at the same time we need to be informed about what's just all chemicals and this has no natural ingredients. So once again, it goes back to being educated and being informed.

So definitely Whole Foods, Trader Joes, their model has been we sell natural products, so you know what their standard is. So yes, you will find a better selection and probably higher quality organic based or naturally based products in chains that specifically speak to this consumer. However, walmarts and targets recognize that the green movement is very much alive right now and very much ; they also have to have options that cater to that consumer as well, however, regulations are starting to be put in place that limit what you can put in products from a chemical standpoint, so I know all companies are geared towards a more natural selection because you have demanded that I do not want this in my product. So yes you have more variety at whole foods and trader joes but if you are informed then you can figure out which products are more natural or organic at a Walgreens or target or convenient mass type channel.

N: as far as the purchasing power, especially in the city of Chicago, we spent over 86 billion dollars on beauty aids and cosmetics alone. You guys are following demands. So as soon as Big Bird gets on television tomorrow and hes gonna say buy banana soap its organic. Let me tell you, product companies are smarter than you as a consumer because they are watching what your are afraid of. They are watching what you are looking for. Education is very important when you guy to buy products because if you don't know what it is and are going based on what people say then youre gonna get lost and spend a lot of money.

What do you all think about sulfates?

The panel was asked a question regarding whether or not they recommended natural haired women making their own products.

E: If you have the time and you can research what ingredients are good and you have the ability to make your own products, I do not see why you shouldn't. If you know what each ingredient does, how youre using it, and how you can mix it up in your own house, by all means go for it. My only caution is having the wrong research or developing products in your house that may not go well with other things. It's just a matter of convenience and preference.

Nikko: Madame CJ Walker had a problem. Her hair was failing out. So she found certain things that would help her restore what was going on with her scalp. So she made her own concoction and she found out that people had some type of dandruff that was taking out the scalp. Let's stop a minute and look at all of the pictures in your mother's house. You see all of those sisters that had long flowy hair

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The natural hair movement has not only provided pertinent information

Audience: I remember when I was a little girl, they didn't have a lot of products that they have now. And women wore their hair straight and in natural styles. They had gorgeous hair. It wasn't receding and what have you. And I remember my grandmother, you know, she had the long flowing hair and all her daughters had long flowing hair. And she made her own products. What's happening now is that we're talking about the products that you can buy and are already bottled, but a lot of young people are going back to the day and making their own products for the hair. My son has thick… a lot of hair he wears in twists and what have you…and he created his own products for his hair. And I just wanted to address that: is that something that we should start embracing rather than start taking shortcuts? Maybe we should get on the Internet and start doing some research and look and see…Maybe we should take some ownership and think that maybe this is something that we could try to do for ourselves.

Interview with Samantha

My interview with Samantha stemmed from me trying to connect with my peers and looking at this movement from my generation's standpoint. When thinking about the topic's significance to my own life, I remember that this movement is not just about creating hairstyles or giving women tools to manage their natural hair, but to also create an educational space that was not otherwise there. Within the green movement, mostly white middle-to-upper class folks had access to information about recycling and reducing greenhouse emissions but also following that was the transition to buy organic and eat green. This was reserved for people that could afford to buy organic and use more sustainably packaged products and so forth. There was education already happening within these spaces that built upon information and created more and more barriers based on socioeconomics. So I firmly believe that the natural hair movement created an avenue to speak about going green in the black community. The environmental movement has also been tainted as an issue that is not necessarily intimate in our lives but is something that needs to be existentially looked at and brought into our personal lives buy buying green homes, and purchasing from whole foods and purchasing and riding a bike to work instead of taking the train. Not only do all of these things require substantial household income but also disregard that there are people who very directly interact with environmental justice issues. Toxic waste companies dump their by-products into rivers that directly connect to water supplies of thousands of people in low-income communities. This has happened in Chicago's project housing units where residents has only recently discovered that the high rates of cancer and other health complications can be somewhat attributed to toxic chemicals in the water sources. So the green movement did not promote the issues in communities of color but the desires of the people who this movement targeted which once again constitutes as middle-upper class white people. Taking it a step further, within this space there was room to talk about discuss and mobilize around these issues but not

around the issues relating to people of color. We did not have a say in this movement. So I dare say that women of color have now the opportunity to participate in ways they have never been able to before. By categorizing this as an issue of environmentalism it not only recognizes the neglected intersectionality of environmentalism and what constitutes as an environmental issue but it also gives people who want to participate the means to do so in a way that values their personal experiences and daily activities.

In this interview Samantha speaks very critically about how she was able to find a voice in this movement through space that was created.

J: What is your name and age?

Samantha: My name is Samantha and I am twenty-one years old.

Joyce: What made you want to keep you hair curly?

Samantha: I think, you know, when I got towards the end of my high school it seemed like people were starting to appreciate the curly hair more. So there was definitely positive reinforcement. So I remember like freshman year when I wore my hair straight a lot and when I didn't I would wear hair scarves and little things like that. And at the time, it wasn't the thing, it wasn't cool then and you know, so I had people call me erykah badu or chaka khan and like now I take those things as a compliment but when I was fifteen I was like what are you talking about? And it didn't seem as endearing as it does when I hear those things now. But you know when I got closer to my senior year and my freshman year of college people started to ask me well how long have you been natural and what do you do to your hair? And I looked at them kind of crazy because I just kind of do it out of comfort like whatever works best but I think that you know those positive reinforcements sort of made me feel like there was less of a need to you know my hair to be neat. The straightening of it was really about it sometimes being neat when I didn't do it because sometimes I did it when it was cold to make it easier to deal with but some times it was about it being neat, about it being pretty, or about it being a particular style. Now that I look back I really wish I wore an afro to prom. But it was sort of like, when you wanted it to look clean and neatened up, then it would have to be straight. And now it's at a point where it doesn't have to be that way. I don't feel like my hair needs to be straight to go to an interview because I feel like you know when its in an environment when its not African American people its like oh well your hair is so pretty. I think its expanded in our environment because you see it in so many more places now. It went from me being the only one to me being one of many.

J: I know that a lot of natural blogs started coming out and then Target started selling natural hair products did you engage in that movement more because it was popular or was it kind of the same for you because you've always been natural?

S: I think I engaged in it more not necessarily because it was popular but because it was popular, it made it easy. For me it was always an issue of trying to find hair products that were you know, and finding curly hair products amongst European aesthetic was hard to find for me because even their kind of curly hair was not my kind of curly hair. When I went straight into trying to go into the beauty supply store is on the other end, the olive oil and you know, if very heavy for my hair, you know, and if I had to categorize my hair it would be multi-racial. Because its uncharacteristic of the two, you've got permed hair and really thick hair, you know the curly hair is in between, there was no in between for me. When it started getting popular you've got more and more people you know either with curly hair who are wearing it curly or people who have been straightening their hair that actually wearing it kinky and curly now or theyre trying to get it to be curly. So there's this wide array of hair textures now and I have more of an opportunity to go out to buy and try these new things. Cause I was always tryna find new things, but it was not necessarily a natural hair thing. It was tryna find something that worked for me cause there wasn't really a space that fit for me and I was really tired of wearing my hair straight all the time. So a lot of times I just wore my hair straight because there weren't products available or advice I could seek out because nobody had my kind of hair. So when you've got youtube videos popping out and these people doing braidouts and twistouts, doing conditioning treatments and all these things that I would have never known because my mother also has a different hair texture than me, she wears her hair straight most of the time because its almost straight anyway. And its only curly in the back. So because she doesn't wear her hair curly we both are still sort of just figuring it out. Because her hair is still curly toom but she has to wear it straight cause its straight in the front and there just wasn't a space for us and there wasn't anyone I could really seek advice from because the people I knew with curly hair had much thinner hair and you know were Puerto rican or they were Mexican or they were irish and their hair textures just didn't match mine. And if they were black, their hair was staright, and didn't know anything about it. So now we've got all these blogs popping up. I guess in hindsight I really did delve into it more because it was a space I had been looking for that wasnever there. And I don't have the ingenuity to sit and figure out shea butter and coconut oil, I would just buy it. And now I can. And I was sort of like irritated because everyone's like oh this natural hair movement and im sort of like this is sort of how I've always been living. But in hindsight ive definitely benefitted from everyone jumping on the wagon because that space that I had been looking for is finally there now.

J: and in terms of products, how are you about purchasing products? Do you look at the ingredients and if you do, have you always looked at ingredients?

S: As I've gotten older, I've definitely started looking at ingredients more. Before I was looking at the type of hair texture it was but I look more at ingredients now. I'm trying to move away from anything artificial and that sort of just in my entire life. I look at ingredients on my food, I look at ingredients on my skin care products. I use half of my skin care products also on my hair and that's as natural as it can get. If I

cant use it on my hair I cant use it on my body and vice versa. At least for the most part.

S. I think everything started happening around my freshman year of college. So my freshman year was when I started wearing my hair natural more often, I did get it straightened too because I was working at a hair salon but that was more so because it was convenient and it was free. And it became more a matter of choice like when I first started straightening my hair but not like it was mostly throughout high school where I felt it needed to be done every couple of weeks. I think my sophomore year was when I started being an ingredient buff and I don't really know if the hair was separate from all of those things. I think it was sort of me looking at what I do in my diet and what I do in my hair; they both sort of happened at the same time and I think they were triggered by different things. I think that through college I was putting myself in an environment with more like-minded people so I met people who were able to tell me products I could use in my hair and I also met people who were vegan. And so those two things sort of collided and I don't really know if one was the epiphenomenon of the other or not.

J: And what are the primary sources that you use to gather your information when it comes to like ingredients and product information?

S: Most of the time I look at the websites for the products or sometimes I will just buy something like I have a big, stupid jar of 100 percent shea butter. It's nothing more than that. Sometimes its just as simple as looking at the ingredients on the container as I'm passing by; I don't really have a regime…I just sort of, I try new things a lot same as I've always done, I look at reviews. One of my friends Kimberly lewis from high school she has a website called the natural hair academy, im not on it as much, its new, but its definitely a great idea; its basically like a social media site but they sort of allow you to group yourself based on your texture of hair and theres a large variety based on where you would fit. People share hair products that work specifically for natural hair and specifically for your grade of natural hair and I think they've added a page where you can see the product and have a page for you to buy those products and things like that. A lot of it is through the grape vine communication with other people. I also buy a lot of stuff from whipped body goods. They have all their ingredients listed online, all their ingredients are natural and its stuff that you can probably find in your own grocery store and make it, but each individual item is formulated in a different way to work for a different thing.

It saves me the time of trying to make it myself, which I could, but I'd rather just buy it to save myself time and also to support black-owned businesses.

Do you personally think that the natural hair movement has been educational for you in any way?

S: I think overall its been educational for most people and for me its been educational for very specific things. For me the natural movement has fell on the

trajectory that I was already on, but I can definitely see for a lot of people where this is new to them, has definitely been a source of tryna find more natural remedies. I think I was already in that direction and it sort of filled that gap that was missing; I think it definitely filled in a lot of the gaps that were missing specifically for African americans because I think a lot of the stuff that was out there isn't really culturally receptive to African americans. Because there is stuff out there on holistic remedies on holistic hair care treatments but its not receptive to our community so even as simple as having something that doesn't neccesarily work for my diet or the grocery stores in my area or that works with my hair texture, having this natural hair movement filling in those gaps for African americans because as much stuff as I looked at it just didn't really fit. So it just filled those gaps where all those forms of education hadn't really found their way to fit in my day to day life.

Interview with Jasmine

JA: Would you consider yourself someone that wears their hair naturally?

JO: Yes

JA: And have you ever had a relaxer?

JA: Yes.

JO: And when did you have this?

JA: Senior year of high school was my last time.

JO: And can you talk about what made you decide to go natural?

JA: Cause my hair broke off really bad, so I decided to let my hair grow and keep it in braids until my hair achieved a look I decided.

JO: During this time did you learn more about products or did you learn more about what types of things worked well for your hair?

JA: I'm learning more about not overdoing it. So like tight headbands and learning to let it do its thing and do what works for you. I know what works for my hair. I have friends who are natural who help me out if I need help with stuff.

JO: Did you use any blogs or websites to help you along with the process?

JA: I used a sew-in and then braids to transition. But then I used YouTube and websites for hair typing things to do when you're natural and learning how to transition.

JO: Are there any websites or blogs you can name specifically?

JA: I think I used CurlyNikki and this Facebook page I forgot what its called. And I used this girl on YouTube. That's all I can think about. I don't remember.

JO: So when you pick out products do you look for specific ingredients?

JA: I try not to use like sulfates in my hair, and I guess more naturally products that are made to be used for Black people and created by Black people. Like co-washes and not straight sulfate shampoos.

JO: Do you ever look out for other ingredients like methylparabens or other preservatives?

JA: UH UN I don't think I do. I just use what I've seen or heard about. My aunt, she's a vegan and she kinda takes care of don't use this don't use that.

JO: And what are the products you are currently using that you like?

JA: I like Shea Moisture Deep Conditioner and Argan Oil Shampoo and Conditioner.

Interview with Malika

J: Have you ever had a perm?

M: My whole life. I've never had a perm. I mean I straighten my hair sometimes but no, no chemicals. I haven't put any other chemicals in my hair other than dye.

J: So you've always been wearing your natural right?

M: I've worn my hair natural in terms of no chemicals, but I have straightened it a lot. I didn't always wear it curly.

E-Mail Interview with Oyin Handmade

Tell me a little bit about your company and how it started.

I started as a consumer - back in 2001, there were hardly any commercially available products that catered to the moisture and care needs of the naturally-minded consumer with highly textured hair. I began experimenting with my own kitchen concoctions for personal use, and because I was a freelance web designer at the time, eventually built a website to sell the products to others with similar needs. Little by little, the demand for and reputation of the products grew. Before we knew it (ok so it was about four years, lol) my husband and I looked up and it was what both of us were spending most of our time doing!

When you started Oyin Handmade, why did you feel there was a need for a product like Oyin Handmade in the natural hair community?

JB: Back in 1999, 2000, I was looking for natural products to provide moisture to my tightly coiled hair. because there weren't many commercially available options out there at the time, i found myself constantly mixing and cocktailing things together to get the effect i was looking for. little by little this mixing and matching turned into kitchen experiments with natural ingredients, and the line was born!

Since then, the market has really grown to embrace natural hair and body care products. It's really beautiful to see. Now to see our products in mainstream stores like Target and Whole Foods is amazing because we are able to get it into the hands of so many more people who are looking for quality, nourishing products.

And we are not the only ones out there! Folks have so many opportunities to find the perfect products to make their hair happy.

I have been using Oyin Handmade for a few years now and love the fact that I can pronounce all the ingredients you use in your hair care products. Why did you make the conscious decision not to include some of the commercial preservatives and other chemical ingredients some larger companies use in their hair care products?

Our products are full of many food grade & natural ingredients - we feel it's important to "feed" the skin and hair with ingredients that are healthy, whole, and nutritious. Nutritious oils have components which can do a host of amazing things: mimic our skin's natural oils, penetrate the hair shaft to provide strength, provide a measure of natural sun protection, or a host of other benefits. We do use preservatives in those products which need them -- a good rule to keep in mind is that if oil and water are mixed, the product needs a wide-spectrum cosmetic preservative to protect against bacteria, yeasts, and molds. This is very important b/c it keeps the goodies safe on the shelf. The preservative we use is approved worldwide and is one of the gentlest and most effective we could find… think it's great that science and nature can work together in this way to keep us healthy and happy!

This relates to question 3, but how did you learn about the ingredients you currently use in your products and their effectiveness for healthy hair care? From home? Social media networks? The hair care industry?

i was raised using pure olive oil or coconut oil as my only body moisturizers, so i always knew that things from the kitchen could do double-duty as personal care. I think someone gave me a 'make your own spa treatments!' book as a gift once, and this opened my eyes to some of the basics of mixing, melting, and simple formulating. Social media didn't exist yet as such -- it was web 1.0 at the time, lol --

but the natural hair community did thrive on bulletin board and discussion sites like nappturality.com and naturallycurly.com -- and members of these sites did exchange recipes and tips; there was also a lot of information about ingredients and formulary available at the supply sites for soapmaking and toiletry hobbyists… places that sell ingredients, oils, and containers. creating the products was a LOT of fun. I still do the new product development and that creative trial and error is my joy!

You all have a bunch of social media networks including Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. How do you use those platforms to educate your customers and the broader natural hair community, if at all.

We have always sought to connect with our customers both online and off… over the years it has been via our blog, then audio podcast, then video podcast, and now social media. We also meet folks in person at our Saturday Boutique (our Brick&Mortar store located at 2103 N. Charles Street in Baltimore) as well as out bottling parties where we invite Oyin Honeys to come help us continues to work well for us, and as our distribution increases elsewhere we are increasing the social and cultural element of what we do.

Overall, what ways do you think that Oyin Handmade contributes to the natural hair movement?

The most important thing that Oyin does is affirm our customers! We send a bit of love out into the world and encourage people to see the everyday acts of self-care as an accessible luxury, and a delightful experience. Of course, we also make super high quality products and that's pretty darn important, too.
smiles,
the oyin team

Cat's Thoughts on Locks

C: …And then I wanted to lock my hair because I wanted locks when I was a lot younger, by my mother would make little disparaging comments here and there so I never did… But I was like, you know what, if I can cut my hair then I can lock my hair too. Because I wanted to do that for a while now. So then I went to a salon and I didn't like the way they did them so then I was about to go up to school and was like, "you know what, I'm about to go to a predominantly white institution, this is going to be the time for me to really get to know my hair because I can walk in here with

bantu knots that maybe went wrong, but they don't know any better." If I'm you know thirty and now I want to try bantu knots, like yeah let me not set myself up like that. But I can go natural now and actually get to know my hair. And I wasn't doing anything but a puff at first.

Tarika's Thoughts on Going Natural

" It was positive in that, oh Tarika youre starting a site and its great for you and who ever wants to follow."… But I did meet a lot of apprehension in that people were like, "Oh, that's great for YOU, Tarika. Not gonna work for me." Like I'm not about to go natural…It's hot outside, how am I gonna natural?" That doesn't look good on everybody. Which is interesting, like the hair that grows out of my scalp doesn't look good on everybody."

Thoughts on Education from Erica

Erica: I have interacted with women who say 'oh no, chemicals don't touch this hair. But then you see them scarfing down a burger that has been preserved in the some of the things people use to preserve products.' I am not condemning either one its just a matter of being educated about what you're willing to accept in your lifestyle and then stick to it and use your purchasing power to support the organizations or companies that make products that cater to your standard. Um, but what gets a little irritating to me is that they just don't know they're not educated and they are repeating what someone else said who repeated what somebody else said that came from a source that was completely wrong. I think us as communities need to get more educated about hair products and not just hair products not just skin products but the products in general. Like we have a lot of power in this economy and we need to utilize and utilize our voices and tell those companies what we want. So as a chemist, when I'm hired by a company to develop a product for a consumer who looks like you, I need to know want and what you're standard is. Because its my job to go in and develop products that say this meets your standard and so that you know it is what it is and you're buying what they say it is.

Interview 1

Joyce and Informant A

Joyce: So I can use this interview for my project?

Informant A: Yes

J: And its okay for me to record?

A: Yes

J: Okay. Um… So, premeiro, qual e o seu nome?

A: Maria

J: O que e sua raca?

A: Sou negra e… sim.

J: Entao, sobre cabelos, em Salvador cabelos lisos sao preferivel ou nao.

A: Pra mim, eu acho que sim.

J: Por que?

A: Porque o padrão e cabelos lisos.

J: E voce considera seu cabelos aparte seu identidade?

A: Yes.

J: Por que?

A. I…I don’t know but I consider …I cant say why but…I think it is form my personality because when you have straight hair you have your treatment when you have a frizzy hair you have another treatment and this helps to form your identity. Yes? Because when you have straight hair you are more beautiful and you don't need make a treatment to change they. So…And when you when you choose afro and use your hair you show yourself for the world. How are you? So …When you create your hair free , so natural, so you wanna say a thing. When you make treatment you wanna say another thing. But this is not intentional. So we make things while you are doing.

J: In Salvador, like, how are people treated differently based on the hair?

A: Based on the hair? So?

J: Like, you said that people that have their hair straight are treated one way, right? And people that have their hair curly, or frizzy or afro are treated another way right?

A: Yes.

J: Can you explain the different types of treatment people get?

A: I think when you have straight hair, you enter in the way that the society wants you. Its like they in our society we have to occupy the street dressed and if you walk undressed you aren’t in the way of the way you have to be. You understand? The Padrao? If you aren’t in this culture, you aren’t a good person. Yes? So here I think if you have straight hair you are more similar white people so you are in the culture. If you aren’t falling this way, you are out. So you are against with us, the culture. You aren’t the culture of the people are. You aren’t beautiful, you aren’t good people. I think if you have straight hair you open more doors to enter but you aren’t in. So you are but youre not. So you can straight your hair but in the final of things you will

know, you will understand this is not enough to you be there inside the society. So you will try to but you never will get there because you aren't right? You don't have straight hair. You aren't blonde so will all the time try to but you wont be.

J. Muito interessante. Voce acha que os negros vestindo seus cabelos naturalmente uma declaracao politica?

A: I think so. I think when you wear your hair dress your hair naturally you show you are fighting for something. Because anyone like to use this type of hair because you are black and you are like slave people so you don't want to be a thing a kind of people that the society says is not good. This is like a black people like a slave so the people is almost to be a slave. You can study you can be rich or be poor so in the final things you are black and you look like a slave. So I think when you wear your hair naturally, you are saying I know that can straight my hair I can get in the society so I will use my natural hair because I am saying to society I dont enter this culture because if I am in this culture I will be less than white people. So I will use my hair the form I want to use and one day will be heightened because I am a human like you and you have to accept me. I think it could be this intention.

A: I tried a treatment from Beleza Natural and it is not natural because they have chemicals products. So they say to you, no this is all natural and you don't have chemical products. How can a product change your hair if it don't have chemical? So I didn't believe but they tried to say to try and a lot of people believe this but the people now are making sense it is not true. But I made a treatment to turn my hair curly. They said ah your hair could be curly if you try. But I make the process because I am in a hair that is hard for me enter with this hair. My area is administration and I need my hair straight in this area. Sometimes I put in a ponytail or bun and go. So Sometimes if I give it to win something I make it straight with a flat iron but that is a long time. I don't make more this. I don't make a treatment because I don't want it falling out. I don't need to be with my straight hair but I think

in my graduation I need it to be my hair. When I was making my hair in my graduation I needed to be with in hair more straight more beautiful, yes?

J: They made you straighten it?

A: Ah they don't make you but they say ah you don't straight your hair? I think you more beautiful with this? Why you don't try? But you know they are say to you make this, and we don't appear to you if you are with this appearance. I make that I don't understand. "Oh do you think I will be more beautiful?" Because sometimes you need to make you are a fool person and not intelligent you don't understand nothing because sometimes it is less difficult and sometimes but you say, "yes so one day I will try" but then you don't make (laughing). Cause sometimes you have to make things you don't want to make. But I think there is a line for things you don't want to do. You cant force this line because if you make this you cant be you. You can be sick you can be mad and after the time I didn't want more to straight my hair, I didn't more because you will make things you don't want to do because the people are pressuring you and you make the things after this don't satisfy you and you start to think again this your value. And you understand this. You make things and after you see it is nao vale a pena (not worth it). You make a force and you don't want what you get.

J: O que tipos productos mercados agora para cabelos de negras?

A: We have few products. If you ask, do you have products for curly hair? And the seller says we have this product is good to your hair is falling when your hair is breaking to treat your hair? But to treat your hair naturally we almost don't have products so you have to look for a product in a specialized place. But in popular stores you don't find good products. The best is to look for natural things. Babosa we cut the edges and we take the gel for mixture in another product.

J: What are the other natural household products that people use? Like, are there other things that people use like coconut oil? Or almond oil or yogurt or other fruits? Do a lot of black women use that in their hair?

A: Yes. But I don't use a lot of things. I use coconut, almond oil, abacate (avocado) and I use alma. It is a plant. This plant has very dark green leaves and we make like juice with the leaves and the most time we mix with another thing. But I have a classmate you use a spice in the skin but she said when she was younger her mother pass spice because it make the hair stay more lively (laughing) but she said she uses a lot of things like this. She said when she was a child she used all kinds of plants. She find tomatoes. She says is good to the hair. She 's a hair dresser and she said sometimes the natural product is better than the commercial product.

J: O que e suas experencias com cabelos in Salvador?

A: I don't want to say my experience is negative or positive because experience is experience. No? I did things I didn't want to make because the families oppress you to make. They say fix your hair! It is like something is not good. So you have to make adjustments to your hair. All the time they say this to me because I treat when I was younger, when I was thirteen years, after I stop because the products are harmful to you. It is not a very good experience. After, the hair stay beautiful, but the process is painful. I stopped when I was fifteen because it broke, parts of my hair. When I arrived in Salvador I was itching and when I was nineteen I straight my hair to be straight to be permanent. But now I start curly my hair. My hair has its own life!

J: Voce acha que isso e importante pra estudantes?

A: I believe yes. I think studies of hair are important to study the identity and study the oppression. Because here its different than the united states racism is different because here we don't recognize ourselves as black people, we try to negate or affiliate because we learned that be black is ugly and is not good because we

sometimes our grandparents or ancestors know if they affiliate themselves like black. They had to guarantee their right to not be a slave again so we all the time try to run off of the racism and this charities make you be similar to slave people. So because slavery people are black people.

Interview 2
w/ Informant B

Described her race as rasta.
J: Qual e o sua experencia com os cabelos em Salvador?

B: Positiva? Negativa?
B: Em Salvador e dificil (por que) totalmente racist. Divided by race, divided by class. For me, because I have dreadlocks, people associate me with Rastafarianism and assume this is me. Many women do not like to have dreadlocks because it is not seen as desirable and many people want their hair to look "neat" they they do not think that dreadlocks are neat. People think this is dirty and messy.

J: Wow. This is the same in the United States.

Interview 3 Summary
Informant Hair Dresser Beleza

This city is 90 percent black and the market for black hair is interesting because we don't have many types of business dealing with black hair in Salvador. Black hair is a specialization and is not seen as common. Black hair is a part of the identity and that it is regional and more about black people. People in the workforce don't want to accept that they have natural hair. Today is more normal for black woman to accept her black hair but they don't have many hairstyles because its more common that people want to work with straight and blonde hair. Nowadays people wear more natural black hair.

In the beginning people don't want to work with black hair because white people have straight hair. He has five sisters that have black hair so he was working with that and he used natural things for their hair. He used leaves to get the hair to work and get better. In the past, jobs do not accept black hair and you could not get a job with wearing your hair natural.

Not many professionals that work with black hair in Salvador at all. Self-esteem of the black woman allow to take their hair. (I am assuming this means that if the self-esteem is good, then women feel comfortable with their natural hair.) Its important for people to accept their identity and to feel okay in society. He doesn't agree with products just for black people because he thinks that the professionals need to know how to work with all hair. He likes to work with natural products and he said that the chemical is necessary to make hair easier to manage and is more practical and makes the curl pattern loose.

Media and fashion are beginning to use black people more so it is more common right now, not enough, but more common than twenty years ago. Before we did not see black people at all in the media. New fashion is starting to be created by people who are living in the favelas and slums, people who are on the runway now do not make so much new fashion.

When you look at someone I see first how you dress and if your hair is pretty, shiny, it is easier to like you if you have beautiful hair. Women feel better if they look at themselves and see that they look good. You can buy new jeans, new shirt, and new shoes but hair is not done then you don't feel good. In the beginning he identified with natural hair and he began just cutting and then he see that he needed to study and work more with woman hair and he would have more opportunities to work. Nowadays it is more common to braid but twenty years ago it was not and when he studied at the university he researched the evolution of hair. His advisor did not like this and did not agree with the concept and he did not get a good grade because it wasn't something that made sense to the faculty at the time.

He had problem with his research and if I need more help he wants to help me. Everyone have a way to have a black hair and the blacks are everywhere in media now and we need to occupy more spaces like in Salvador don't have anyone that have important position. He could be a thief because he has had financial problems but the hair trade saved him. Media is good and its bad and he is afraid that media is looking for him and portray he is expensive and he doesn't want this. Not just about hair but about the chemical as well to work with. People need to love selves and respect more and have more political laws.

Interview 4
Joyce and Santos

It is difficult to categorize race because there are many negative aspects that come along with it if you classify as one. No one can say exactly for this. My mother does not accept her natural hair. She wore her hair with synthetic braids for ten years. But for me it is different. I have been natural for 12 years. Here it is okay for people to be natural for Carnival and things such as that because of the parties but for everyone it is better to be white.

I took history and the image of woman and the black hair and being black is associated with bad things and no one wants to be like black people and people try to straight the hair to look more clear. My daughter likes to use natural hair and when I was sixteen years old I worked with braids synthetic and its why I work with people in Carnival. So I do braids for just that period and people during the carnival want to be black, use black clothes, and wear more comfortable things that are said to be associated with blackness. (Cultural appropriation)

Last year she shaved her hair because she was accepting herself and she works with Buddhism wear she had to shave her hair. Afterwards she let her hair grow natural. As for products, products are very expensive and not everyone has the money to use it. Media does not show products to black hair and its just for straight hair and sometimes they speak about curly hair but it is not enough. Her father does not agree because of Rastafarianism that is associated with natural, kinky hair. If you use dreads you are assimilating to this or representing it in some way. Sometimes when you have dreads its associated with people who use drugs and her father does not like this. Her hair is her identity and in ODARA they accept but in other places they don't accept.

To her, the hair influences more than color because if you have blacks with straight hair it is similar with someone that is white. Men prefer straight hair but not everyone because that is just the stereotype but for man to accept curly hair he has to accept himself as a black man and will then accept black hair of a woman.

Hair is related to politics because black people are looking for change. When you accept black hair you feel you belong to some place and is affirmation and recognition about your own personality and identity. Sometimes women have trouble doing this because own family and significant other do not accept this.

Facebook and YouTube as tools of affirmation because they have groups that teach about taking care of the hair, which contributes to good self-esteem. Household products: years ago families use these products at home, aloe vera,

coconut and nowadays is more difficult because of time maybe. The first product that she used to use was cornstarch and its first makes shine and give life to her hair. Tried new things and she used tutorial on YouTube and talk with people and exchange experiences about the hair. Beauty courses and in this course people don't know how to work with black hair professional many people don't have money to keep curly hair or wear straight. She said that you have to use shampoos that already exist and mix your own products to make it work. Market makes things and is beginning to look for things that work for curly hair. She uses three kind of creams: one to hydrate, one to nourish and one to restore.
Cream to detangle. She just spritz with water and oil.

Interview 5
Hair Dresser in Pelarinho

She says in her interview that she loves her work and so her experience has been positive working with black women. I asked if people preferred straight hair in Salvador and he replied no because most of the people in the city were black and everyone is conscious of color and identify with Africa. She explains that nohing is better than the other because it is “our culture, our race, our way of life”. When asking her about negative experiences she may have had about race, she replies that normally there are some people who are racists but she does not surround herself with those people.

I also asked her about the preference of white women over black and she said yes this is the case on television and it is what we have showed to everyone in novelas. But she says that yes that is one type of beauty but there is also beauty in the black woman that needs to be shown. She says that whites are not above blacks and that it is all in the head because both races are at the same level. I asked her about the types of hairstyles her customers liked and she said that they like to diversify their hair. She said that no matter the race, politics, or class people can get their hair done and diversify their style. (9:29) She says that when you get your hair done, you have

good self-esteem and you feel beautiful. She says discrimination and other negative things are stupid and it is bullcrap. I also ask her if hair is important for her identity and she says yes because she accepts being black and her hair is a part of this and principally, her livelihood.

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