

“The Mind of the Natural Woman” by *Nekea Valentine*

“Remove the kinks from your brain,” said the late great Marcus Mosiah Garvey.

How many times have we all read this famous quote but not fully embraced its meaning? When I think about the mindset that it takes to be a natural woman, I consider these words. They encompass all that a woman must do to remain steadfast in her quest to keep her hair in its purest, most unadulterated form.

There is a certain “something” about a natural woman. We have all seen it – twists blowing in the wind or fro defying it; the confidence and awareness of self they possess. We are drawn to it and often find ourselves asking how we can get what they have. It starts with a transformation of the mind, the deconstructing of the idea that our natural hair is bad, ugly and unacceptable. Along with that, we need an understanding that natural hair is good hair; beautiful in all sizes, shapes and forms. Ultimately this comes from within.

Embarking upon a natural hair journey can be challenging in many different ways. There is a change physically, but the journey fosters change internally as well. Remember that acceptance starts with you, so expect the battle within that may come with trying to make peace with the natural beauty of your hair. It will take time to come into your own as a strong, natural woman but be patient with yourself. Allow yourself to experience this evolution, and trust that she will emerge.

There will most certainly be those who oppose your decision to wear your hair naturally. They may include spouses, significant others, family, friends, close acquaintances, etc.... Remain strong in your convictions. Remember the damage that you endured while relaxed: the burns, the breakage, all the while wondering why your hair never seemed to grow. The time and money spent, the weave that fell out in the store and embarrassed you to death! ;-) You decided to return to your natural roots because you felt compelled to do so, so when it gets difficult you must refuse to believe that God made a mistake by blessing you with your kinks and coils. Dare anyone, including yourself, to try and convince you otherwise!

While I believe that mental and emotional strength will come from within, there are resources available to create an environment within which you can remain happy and natural. There are a host of websites and books that now cater to natural hair. It is important, particularly in the beginning of your journey, to arm yourself with as much information as possible to solidify your position as a strong, natural queen. “Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America” by Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps addresses the history of how we came to believe that our hair was not beautiful in its natural state, and reveals the error in this thinking.

Remember that your ancestors adorned their natural hair with beautiful crowns, beads, and jewels. Look to them for strength in times of second-guessing, frustration, or the desire to please someone else by relaxing your hair. Speak to your natural self every morning in the mirror. Tell your hair how much you love it and feel your heart swell. Your feelings of contentment will become stronger each day. This is only a glimpse into the mind of the natural woman – you'll have to remain that way to find out the rest!