

EDITORS JOURNAL

Our Editor's Natural Hair Journey: An Act Of Self Love

4 MINUTE READ



Our Editors Natural Hair Journey: An Act Of Self-Love



PHOTO BY RETHA FERGUSON

By Claudia Cole

After months of lockdown and the temporary closure of hair salons across the nation, many women started embracing their natural hair for the first time. While being cooped up at home, hundreds of users shared a glimpse of their luscious curls on Instagram using the hashtag #quarantinecurls.

The unexpected re-emergence of the natural hair movement made me reflect on my own journey.

Two years ago, I embraced my Afro-textured hair, and it taught me the essence of self-love in ways I could have never predicted.

One weekend in 2018, I had just finished blow drying my hair, ready for styling. I was no stranger when it came to using hair extensions.

I spent half my life hiding my natural hair, believing it was hideous and didn't signify beauty.

I have Type 4 hair, tightly coiled curls that are prone to shrinkage.

Before styling my hair, I took in my appearance in the mirror. I looked unrecognisable, partly because I

wasn't used to seeing my hair in its natural state. For some reason, it saddened me, and I couldn't help but question why I felt the need to hide it any longer. Who was I doing this for? How did I develop this hatred for a natural part of myself? That night, I abandoned hair extensions for good and went on a quest for answers.

The Beginning

By growing up in a predominantly white area, it continually reminded me how different I was. My hair texture was the biggest reminder. I struggled to see my hair type reflected anywhere, and because of that, it was hugely damaging to self-esteem.

I felt the unbearable pressure to somewhat conform to supposed European beauty standards. However, it wasn't necessarily straight hair that I desired. It was the length and a looser curl pattern because that the closest representation I got to my own hair.

Despite my mother's reluctance, she allowed me to wear synthetic hair extensions for the summer when I was 12. Unfortunately, that temporary decision turned into a decade long issue. After hiding my natural hair although secondary school, I felt the need to continue doing it. So, my natural hair remained hidden during college and my entire three years at university.



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CLAUDIA AT HER GRADUATION CEREMONY IN 2018

Not only was this decision further damaging my self-esteem, but it was also eating up student allowance.

The black hair industry is worth an estimated £88 million. [Research](#) shows that black women spend nine times the amount on hair care than others. These expenses often include chemical relaxers, hair extensions and requiring larger amounts of regular hair products such as conditioner.

Alongside spending excessive amounts on hair care, I became entirely reliant on my extensions for confidence. I worried I'd be ashamed on my natural hair forever.

The Process

Step 1 – Self Compassion

The first few weeks were the hardest after abandoning the hair extensions. Every ounce of confidence felt stripped away. I could feel the negative thoughts beginning to swarm inside my mind about my overall appearance.

However, rather than giving in to those thoughts and criticising my hair like I usually would, I took a fresh approach. I decided to acknowledge my feelings and empathise with myself. Unknowingly, this was the first step towards building a better relationship with myself.

Being compassionate with ourselves is an essential part of self-

love.



Step 2 – Understanding

Due to years of wearing hair extensions, my hair wasn't in the best condition. It was beyond dry, and my scalp became extremely sensitive. Why?

Most synthetic hair extensions and wigs are made from plastic fibres, usually acrylic, polyester or PVC. Not only are these poor-quality materials non-biodegradable, but they also contain harmful chemicals. It can cause scalp irritation and affects hair growth.

With much research and experimenting, I came to realise what was best for my hair and what wasn't. My hair liked moisture. Lots of it! Thankfully, we've seen a surge in black hair products in recent years. There are many high-quality products as featured in our list of [natural black beauty brands](#). However, there several others among the high-street, overpriced and containing toxic chemicals.

By furthering my understanding, my goal became obvious. My hair needed the best nourishment so it could flourish.

There was no going back at this point. From then onwards, I vowed to be kind to my hair and the environment. It was surprisingly doable, with some of the most beneficial ingredients already hidden in my kitchen. There's plenty of affordable [DIY beauty treatments](#) that are just as effective and leaves zero waste.

Step 3 – Acceptance

As my confidence started to steadily rebuilding itself, I wanted to showcase my hair in whatever style felt right. However, I didn't know where to start. Like for many black women around the world, the YouTube natural hair community became a top source of encouragement. It was there where I learned how to style my hair with step-by-step tutorials and first-hand tips.

Yet, Type 4 hair is still massively underrepresented online. YouTubers with looser curl patterns often rake in the highest views. Most tutorials featuring those with Type 4 hair are mainly focused on define curl patterns and taming baby hairs.

As helpful as the YouTube community has been, there is still the misconception that coarse hair is 'bad' or 'unhealthy.' My edges will always rebel against gels, and my healthy curls remain 'unruly.' It's all a sign.

There was nothing wrong with my hair. There never was. This is just how my hair is—wild, free and untameable.

By accepting my Afro-textured hair, I was finally accepting

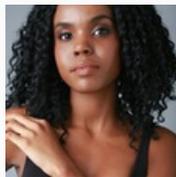
myself. That was the ultimate and most beautiful step towards loving myself.



PHOTO OF CLAUDIA BY ALESSANDRA MERLO

With every coil and curl is a story. Mine has taught me self-love, and because of that, I wear my natural hair with pride.

For all the natural hair beauties out there, what's something you love about your curls? Let us know in the comments below.

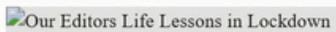


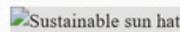
Claudia Cole

Claudia is a film graduate and writer from London. While an enthusiast for books and all things screen related, she is a passionate advocate for mental health & wellbeing.



Claudia Cole

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 A modern, minimalistic living room with muted, natural tones and modern furniture. Photographed by Nicole Franzen.

 Alicja Kwade, "Big Be-Hide", 2017. photo by Maija Toivanen:Helsinki Biennial

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17 COMMENTS

Ameekah

JULY 21, 2020 AT 2:36 PM

Great read! I love the texture and how coily my hair is.

REPLY

Ana

JULY 22, 2020 AT 2:17 PM

I love natural hair. I always did! I straighten my hair once just to try and I hated so much I had to put my hair under water to have my curls back again! Ahahah Lovely to see that more of us are embracing natural hair too!! :))

REPLY

Mawi

JULY 22, 2020 AT 2:44 PM

Only had my hair relaxed once. Shaved all my hair and let it grow naturally. Many products for natural hair, its just a finding one that is in tune with yours. Much cheaper too 😊

REPLY

LaToria

JULY 26, 2020 AT 10:31 AM

I absolutely LOVE this article! It's so wonderful to read about someone else's realization that something needs to be fixed and your journey to facing it with all your might and not turning back!

I also have type 4 hair. I began letting my "new growth" grow beyond my relaxed hair back in 2010. The main reason I did this was because, my edges were thinning badly and I had come to the decision that I would rather wear my hair natural and healthy than relaxed and bald.

It was one of the best decisions I made. I, too, discovered self-confidence that I didn't have before. I discovered that my hair wasn't so scary after all. And I discovered that I could actually do more with my hair being natural than I could with a relaxer! Plus, I didn't have to be afraid of the rain any longer.

Less than 2 years ago, I decided to loc my hair simply because I have children to care for (by myself) and I knew I would not have time to care for my extremely thick afro the way that it needs.

My locs are much easier to take care of and I have more time for my children. The only products I use now is hot or warm water for moisturizing (in the morning) and dab some coconut oil on my scalp maybe once a week. Some days I will spray Rose Water on my hair and scalp.

REPLY

Noemi Plaza

JULY 29, 2020 AT 8:59 AM

Good for you! Thank you for sharing your story. Let's keep showing ourselves some self-love!

REPLY

Trina Elliott

JULY 26, 2020 AT 1:39 PM

I love my natural 4c hair and the shrinkage i just need more length and im never gonna cut it again it takes long to grow back and i need a lot of moisture no gel with alcohol hair products for natural hair that's what i need most

REPLY

Trina Elliott

JULY 26, 2020 AT 1:42 PM

And a good hair brush and comb im shopping for wider comb and and a non shedding brush and anti breakage black hair products

REPLY

Claudia Cole 

JULY 28, 2020 AT 4:48 PM

Thank you very much. That's lovely to hear!

REPLY

Claudia Cole 

JULY 28, 2020 AT 4:58 PM

Thank you all for your messages, tips, and sharing what you love about your curls! Reading all your responses has been so inspiring! Lets continue showing ourselves some self-love!

REPLY

Funmilayo owa

JULY 28, 2020 AT 10:58 PM

I am on the journey of embracing my hair, and I can relate with you story of self love and adoring such beauty every piece of me is.

REPLY

Noemi Plaza

JULY 29, 2020 AT 8:55 AM

Thank you for sharing! We are so happy to see so many women embracing their natural beauty.

REPLY

Sara

AUGUST 1, 2020 AT 3:40 AM

I love the freedom and the flexibility that seconds the acceptance and the cherish of our own hair. It is a bit more time consuming than just hide it under a wig or braiding it out But it is worthy and more importantly,If I decide to go protective I do it out of convenience no out of shame or because I think I look prettier with extentions.

REPLY

Lady T Milton

AUGUST 12, 2020 AT 10:43 PM

Wonderful read. For the past few years I've wanted to wear my natural 4c hair but wife seemed more manageable and sadly more pleasing

wonderful read. For the past few years I've wanted to wear my natural hair but wigs seemed more manageable and sadly more pleasing to my eye and my husband's. Since April (while staying in place) I began wearing my natural hair. I've learned how to take care of it. I've embraced it, I own it, my sassy super kinky is more glamorous than I ever imagined. It's the way it grows out of my head. My husband now even says your hair is cute today. Yes it is!
Thanks for sharing.

REPLY

Noemi Plaza

AUGUST 13, 2020 AT 9:02 AM

Thank you for sharing your story, really inspiring!

REPLY

Rudy

AUGUST 17, 2020 AT 2:48 AM

First I want to say I respect all of you and what you have gone through. Second Claudia you are gorgeous and your hair looks phenomenal.

I am a black man and funny enough I went through something similar. My parents are from Haiti and my mom hated letting me grow my hair. I rocked a short fade for so long. I just found it boring as hell. Then in college I started growing my hair and faced a lot of hate from my black peers in college, especially the men. They thought I was "whack" and "corny". But I decided to keep growing it anyway...funny enough non black people loved it and gave me confidence. I found love for my hair and its texture. I grew up seeing men with flowing long hair and the only black men I saw with long hair had afros or dreads. Bob Marley or Eddie Griffin in "Undercover Brother". Being naturally headstrong I pushed forward and now many of my friends come to me for hair care advice because now people like Jay-Z are growing their hair and it "in".

Now I have the longest healthiest locks in the bunch.

I also told my friends have you ever noticed how rich white business men always have long hair, if they can grow it. I said think about it, its a sign of health and virility.

Now they are buying Rogain like vitamins.

REPLY

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