



Au Naturel

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Unconditional Love Quote

Love lets you find those hidden places in another person, even the ones they didn't know were there, even the ones they wouldn't have thought to call beautiful themselves.
Hilary T. Smith

Good Love Quote

You know you're in love when you don't want to fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams. Dr. Seuss

Passionate Love Quote

Go...and be with her in meaningful ways because that is beautiful and that is generous and that is what loving someone is, that is raw and that is unguarded and that is all that is worth anything, really. Harvey Milk

Eternal Love Quote

True love doesn't have a happy ending, because true love never ends. Letting go is one way of saying I love you. Unknown

Personal and Salon Updates

Summertime in North Carolina is ordinarily a rather "heated affair." But, this summer 2014 has been surprisingly mild (*knock on wood*). It surely isn't over. But, that is a welcome relief as I was in Haiti between August 3-8th; and frankly, some nights were too hot for *hot-natured* me. I typically sleep at a guesthouse where I can share a room with anywhere from 1-3 other ladies. With the oscillating fan on full blast and all windows wide open, a few nights were spent atop of the covers sweating on a cot. But if the mosquitos were out, I still covered-up with a sheet to avoid becoming a nighttime morsel. It's no big deal though. The windows have screens which is more than I can say for when I lived in Jamaica. So, it's definitely doable.

Overall, the trip was a lesson in patience. I planned to achieve several milestones; but, none of them were realized in the timeframe that I had anticipated. They did happen though. In addition to that, I had no Internet access for most of my time in Haiti and our organization's driver was on vacation. So, I was forced to cultivate my own local resources and generally to "figure it out." **Case in point:** The guesthouse failed to collect me at the airport upon my arrival on Sunday. So, I waited and waited and waited. An hour and a half later after three separate calls to the guesthouse only to hear "the driver's on the way," I took a taxi. Luckily, I had the foresight (God-sight) to carry driving directions as street signs are minimal in Port-au-Prince. Upon arrival at the guesthouse, I kindly deducted the amount of my taxi fare (US \$20) from my guesthouse bill and paid the manager. The Parrish Priest was honestly surprised (and visibly annoyed) to learn that I did this; but, I was all about dis-incentivizing "*slack-ness*" as they call it in Jamaica. Most visitors to the guesthouse are White and I'm clearly not; so, I honestly think the person looking for me was simply NOT looking for ME. And since he wasn't carrying the sign they're supposed to carry, we never found each other. Oh well, I'm sure they'll be more diligent the next time I'm coming into town. Through it all, the week was very productive despite the delays so, I give thanks. The most lasting progress is often made by taking baby steps so, patience is requisite to the journey. I'm cool with that.

Here in the salon, Jamie and LaRhonda have been holding down the fort. As an FYI to interested clients, Jamie will be on vacation for the week of August 17th so, please schedule time with her around those days. LaRhonda and I will be taking all appointments scheduled during that week.

For this month's issue of Au Naturel, I've enclosed an essay on belief. It's a departure from the world of hair and fashion but most definitely reflects the light of [A Natural Attitude](#). I feel it's a piece which you will either enjoy immensely, or you'll think is way out in left field. Whichever is your take, I hope you find it to be food for thought... The accompanying article is based on one of the numerous lessons that the salon has richly blessed me with over the years. Hopefully, it's a subtle reminder of the importance of giving love...

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Belief, balance and blessings: An exposition on “reality” from my humble perspective

As a young girl of about 7-10 years (I don't recall exactly), I remember talking with my mother and saying “This is not real.” Her natural response was to ask: “What is not real?” I said, “THIS! LIFE. What we see.” Being naturally concerned about my mental well-being, she barked, “YES, IT IS!! And don't you forget it!” I laugh upon reflection because; I totally understand why she said that. The natural reflex of a Mom is to protect her child. And in Mom's eyes, *I was slipping*. It was time to snap me back to reality, and place me on “firm ground.” I get it. But, I've always been an abstract thinker. The net effect of this exchange however was that I avoided knowing much other than what I was told. It just didn't seem healthy to be or act otherwise. For this reason, I guess I never really thought of belief as an evolutionary process. For me, it was really kind of black and white. Either you believe, or you don't. But, the core essence of belief or the lack thereof is fundamentally grounded in “What”? Is it God, is it Heaven, Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna or a myriad of other belief systems. I have never been one to be fundamentally concerned about what other people believe. Ultimately, people embrace what makes sense to them. So, I respectfully accept that AS LONG AS it does no harm to any other person, namely ME. Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul AND your neighbor as yourself. So if my neighbor doesn't believe in or doubts the existence of God, as my own husband does not, I love him ANYWAY. It is really quite easy to, though honestly maddening at times. (Sorry Hon' ☺). But when it's difficult, I have to weigh and measure my own heart. Not his. Ultimately, it's all good. Over the years, I have tried to influence his belief. He is one of the most learned people I know but also, one of the most stubborn. The one book that I gave him and asked him to read, he lost. I've never seen it since. And it was not widely published so I can't even find it on Amazon. In short, it was a book on the scientific evidence of life after death—very compelling for the materialist-minded like my husband. I think that was the passive-aggressive part of him coming out because he doesn't easily lose books. But accepting a different view requires a paradigm shift. And he's vested. I get it. Yet, what attachment to my husband has given ME is a greater self-realization, a greater “remembrance” and a greater faith than I believe I would have likely known without this gentle tension; because, he has challenged me to rationalize what I've been told. “Make it make sense to me.” **Consider this:**

On Sunday, August 10th, just home from a week-long sojourn in Haiti, I burrowed under my covers with a bowl crate of popcorn and diet coke in hand and prepared to watch “[Heaven is for real](#).” Now, I had heard of the book before and honestly thought it a waste of my time to read. It may sound arrogant, but I didn't think there was anything a four-year old could say to me to shake or shape my belief. As far as I'm concerned, I'm standing on a rock and I cannot be moved. I don't need convincing or more evidence. But in fact, I have **pursued** my current belief system for the sake of my own rational mind, my heart and yes, my husband. I wanted whatever I believe to make sense with science and nature and spirit and to him. Because frankly over the years, he has challenged me to have a rational answer that I can explain without feeling like I'm bound by: “Well, just because” (which in his mind is “superstition”). No, I don't have all the answers to his questions; but then, neither does science. But the wonderful world of quantum physics has opened a doorway to a significant enough paradigm shift that Newtonian physics is compelled to listen. The field therefore has only helped to firm up

my own spiritual beliefs and bridge the gap that existed in my own logical mind. So, watching the movie was not about being convinced for me. It was mainly entertainment, as well as being an unexpected inspiration for this article. The inspiration came from the fact that events in the movie challenged atheists AND Christians to face their core belief system and decide whether they **actually believe** what they profess. That was the most compelling and intriguing part of the movie, in my view. And yes, my husband obliged and watched it with me at my request—while reading a book the whole time. ☺ It didn't matter though. I had the remote control and exercised rewind enough times to frustrate most people. (Hmmm...Now when does sharing becoming badgering? ☺)

Well while it seems that his own spiritual belief system has not changed fundamentally over the years, life has been challenging me of late in ways that are still morphing and shaping my core belief system. It's a bit unnerving because I'm honestly not sure I want to be shaped and morphed anymore. I'm pretty comfortable with where I am and where I've been. But again if I'm honest, the lessons have only served to firm and solidify my belief system and my faith. You see for many years, I **honestly** struggled with the concept of Jesus and God being one and the same. **Let's face it:** We live grounded to the Earth—a 3D reality, and are bound by the laws of Newtonian physics and logic. If you are here, you cannot be there. In fact, millions of people have been acquitted of crimes for the simple fact that they had an alibi. No one disputes that principle. So, the concept of a triune God just didn't make logical sense to me. So, I just went along with what others told me but in my heart of hearts, I wondered HOW? But being married to my materialist husband propelled me to delve into quantum physics. Did you know an electron can be in two separate parts of the universe at the same time and respond as one—being therefore of one unified body? Likewise, electrons appear to move by chance or free will. ([Check out this Nova segment for more info. If you like Star Trek or sci-fi, you will find it interesting.](#)) So if an atomic particle as small as an electron can be in two places at the same time, respond the same when acted upon; yet, exercise autonomy or free will, of course the author of the universe can apply the principle to "Self". No brainer. **But you may ask:** So, why would science be more convincing to you than pure faith? Well, I guess you could say for me, it wasn't. I just wanted a "leg to stand-on" that was NOT grounded in faith or religion. When talking to an agnostic or an atheist, faith means standing on "no ground" at all. They don't and won't hear you. But since quantum physics is in fact proving to the materialist-minded that "We know in part and we prophesy in part" (which is tantamount to knowing NOTHING), it's a most delightful springboard from which to debate with the "scientific realists." Now, I have an explanation for core principles of my faith built on a frame of reference that is grounded in this material plane of existence, which is only refining the picture of faith that lies within my own heart. **If I can provide a metaphor to illustrate:** Imagine being born with an image of God that is drawn in abstract. And with each life lesson and each chapter of existence, God erases more of the distorting brushstrokes, revealing an image of greater clarity, depth and context, with my own life as the canvas on which it is drawn. AMAZING!!!!!!! I have always believed in God. But, I didn't know why I knew or why I knew so vehemently. I couldn't easily explain why. It's just fascinating to me that today, I KNOW even more profoundly than I ever have. And I've always been curious to KNOW more. So, it should be no surprise that the lessons keep coming. But, quantum physics affirms at the sub-atomic level that we don't even begin to understand the nature of reality. As such, what we thought we knew requires a different script—and ultimately a new Scripture—a paradigm shift: A New Testament. Natural laws are now grappling to describe super-natural phenomena. We don't even fully

understand the material plane. So for these reasons, I am excited at the possibilities that can be “responsibly” harnessed by humanity—which is made in the image and likeness of God. (**Note:** I’m really looking forward to seeing the film [Lucy](#).)

But with that said, what I’ve also been compelled to consider is the concept of balance and opposites—yin-yang. Ultimately while I observe this principle in nature, I guess I don’t fully embrace that there should always be balance. You see, Man is made in God’s likeness, and God is love. So, I believe Man’s core essence is goodness and light. In other words within each individual, there should NOT be a balance. Good should prevail. But, Man has an ego and ambition. So, I do accept the presence of negative traits. Likewise, I do somewhat cringe at the possibilities of what future Man is capable of realizing to the opposing and complementary nature of “goodness” and “righteousness.” But overall, I’ve always seen life and the universe from the vantage point of light and good—not a **balance** of good and evil. I guess you could say I embraced $E=mc^2$ in all aspects of life, without knowing why. In other words, energy is ultimately an equation that is squared, so energy by definition **“CANNOT”** be negative. Seeming to live my life unknowingly grounded in this way of thinking, I don’t give evil or dark forces much thought or consideration. I just don’t have time or interest or energy for those things. In my mind, the Father of Lights has enough luminance, radiance and knowledge to teach that I will surely fill an entire lifetime trying to follow “The Way” that I don’t need to concern myself with anything else. But, I guess I was like a soldier “with ungirded loins.” In fact, the Bible is very clear about being [conscious of evil](#). A girlfriend of mine once told me with all seriousness, “You are a being of light. You will attract a lot of darkness.” I remembered the statement but didn’t imbibe it. But life is showing me that I’m extremely naïve—which is a type of blindness. I think I understand better. But, I give thanks for [Psalm 34](#) and so many other scriptures which illustrate that we have not been promised a smooth road. We just won’t be left alone on our journey. The stronger your light shines, the more likely you are to attract moths. Jesus attracted many. And I see beautiful people every day doing beautiful work for mankind and their lives are rife with struggle, turmoil and pain. So, I embrace that truth. Does it therefore not make sense that the “wicked would prosper”—as they say. Frankly, they need some good in their lives!! Don’t they?! But, thank God they’re not the only ones who do. And by the grace of God, there’s plenty of goodness to spread around to all. I consider myself richly blessed. Amen.

So with this acknowledgement of the very 3D, physical laws of balance, I acknowledge that God created ALL, so then ultimately, it really is ALL good-- whatever it is. If we can learn to embrace the light of God as we sit in the even the darkest tunnel, we will know that God’s will prevails. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the lesson is to embrace the darkness with Divine guidance and divine love. Then, we emerge from the dark as more spiritually developed beings, with a faith “that can move mountains.” This is when we prosper, despite our physical, material or financial limitations or states of being; this is when our mental, emotional and spiritual states will reign supreme. And ultimately, these **spiritual points are the ones that count** as true “reality.” So, you see Mom, I guess I was pretty well-informed even at that tender young age somewhere between 7-10 years. It’s just taken me about 40 years to more fully discover how and why I believe: “THIS IS NOT REAL.” But, it’s all good if you believe it is. My husband sure does. ☺

Embrace the beauty of you.

Salon Care Lessons: Giving grace & giving thanks



This piece was inspired by the enormous opportunities we have in life to give thanks for our beautiful blessings and to give grace when we'd frankly rather give the finger. You might be a bit surprised to hear me say that, but I'm human. And some situations test our resolve a bit more than others...

The specific reference that I'm making concerns a salon service that I administered some time back. I don't want to elaborate because it honestly feels like stylist-client privilege and a breach of confidence; even though I have no intention to provide identifiable facts about this case. But suffice it to say: After careful discussion with my client, I conceptualized and implemented a solution that employed creativity, artisan skills, enormous patience and yes, prayer. I do pray over people's hair sometimes when I walk in challenging territory. It gives me peace, if nothing else. But, I was pretty confident about the outcome of this endeavor. I've been crocheting for decades. I'm a master, if I may say so without saying too arrogant. (*Too late, right?*) So, I didn't doubt **even an iota** my ability to apply similar manual dexterity to a client's hair to achieve excellence. In the end, the main goal was achieved, and the effort was seamless. My work was undetectable even to Jamie's expert eyes, as well as others in the salon.

I smiled inwardly but when I saw my client's face, I saw grave disappointment. I wasn't totally surprised as I began to detect overtures of discontent during completion of phase 1 of her service. I thought she looked great but, she became very restless after I turned her to face the mirror. I couldn't figure out why she was so agitated. So, I went to phase 2. When her service was complete, I again turned her to the mirror and she was more upset than ever. The reaction was a bit unnerving as I had just spent over 5 hours on her hair and had another client waiting patiently for me to finish. But, I didn't feel comfortable with where her energy was. Finally, I conceded and told her she owed me nothing. She flatly refused and paid all the same. Then, she left the salon with her head drooping as low as her sagging

shoulders, much like a cartoon character. I was stunned! When I saw this beautiful client with the carriage and diction of Maya Angelou transform in this way, I was suddenly infused with awareness. Ultimately, this client was upset with herself, and she was projecting. She was upset with who and where she is in life. My initial annoyance now turned to great empathy. I saw a woman with very strong, dominant African features. And NO MATTER WHAT I DID WITH HER HAIR, she was going to be that woman with strong African features. I felt sick.

For the next hour, I toyed with the idea of deleting her credit card transaction from the system as I honestly didn't want her money. It felt tainted. Then, she phoned me back to say that she was fine and that she liked her hair. She acknowledged that I looked visibly upset about how she left so, she wanted me to know she was okay. I appreciated her call immensely and was inwardly relieved. We really do need all of the money from our services, but when things don't feel right to me it's just not worth it to take the money. So, I could now have greater peace about accepting the compensation. But before the client hung-up, she quickly infused, "Oh by the way, I removed your work. But I'm okay with my hair now." We concluded the call and hung up. I imagined what the client expected me to feel was disappointment, shame or hurt that the service was ultimately a failure. Well, I felt "a way" (as they say in Jamaica), but it was not those emotions. Instead, I was perplexed because I knew she was lying. I knew she was lying intentionally to make me feel badly, despite having felt the compulsion to call me back so I would "feel better." I honestly couldn't understand why she would bother. Why not leave me with my initial "hurt" feelings. Why re-introduce more pain? I pondered for the remainder of my next client's service and into the night "Why?" I'm still perplexed about that behavior, if I'm honest.

You may ask: Why do you think she was lying? The reason was simple. I did the hair service. I know every step of the process to create it. I knew the amount of work required to dismantle it. In fact, I explained to the client while styling that she would need to come into the salon for me to un-do her service, because she would not be able to do it on her own. I guess she didn't remember me saying that. In fact, a friend would even have grave difficulty assisting her because as I said, the work was seamless. So, if she removed it on her own **within an hour's time** (as she purported), she likely did grave damage to her hair in the process. And she wouldn't be happy about that. I knew she was lying; and that was disturbing to say the least. Jamie asked what she should do if the client calls back to schedule the follow-up. I told her, "Don't worry, Jamie. When she really does try to take her hair down, she will **then** know that I know she lied. And that will seal the deal. We'll never see her again." And we haven't. But, *whoa is life*. WHY do people do such strange and unusual things? I can only wonder. But, I give thanks for grace. I know how to ask for it and I know how to give it. I once recall saying to my Mom (*as an adult, mind you*), "I'm tired of always taking the high road while other people take advantage." With all the wisdom of a mother, she quietly stated, "Schatzi, BE GLAD that you know how to take the high road. Many people don't!" At the time, I was too hurt to feel and hear the full magnitude of those words. But when I think of this client, I know Momma was right (as usual). So, I give thanks for grace. I pray that I will know how to give it when it's required and when to ask for it when I need it. Amen.

Likewise, I give thanks for all the beautiful clients who grace our doors and trust us to care for them. Incidences like this one are few and far between, thank God. But when we have days like these, it only serves as a reminder to take nothing and no one for granted. The other clients in the salon at the time of this service were most empathetic to me, and outwardly stated their

dissatisfaction with her behavior. It didn't lessen my own discomfort; but, I appreciated the acknowledgement of the difficulty of this work, at times.

So with that said, I want to encourage all readers to acknowledge the many blessings that we take for granted as we struggle along the pathway of life.



We have much for which to be grateful. And if you want a healthy reminder, please read a beautiful Mom's take on giving thanks for her "extra-ordinary" kitchen. [Check out the link here.](#) I LOVED IT!! A kitchen remodeling job has definitely been on MY long-term "to do" list. But with two sons in college, it's just not in the budget. So, it is what it is. After reading this article, my kitchen looks pretty darn good to me about now! Hope yours does too, whatever your reality. We give thanks for you. And we wish you God's richest blessings, and peace in the face of adversity. Life is good.

Embrace the beauty of you.