

Au Naturel

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December Updates

Inspired by Grandma Mabel McMillan

The winter arrives this week; but, someone forgot to tell the sun. This week's temps have waffled back and forth considerably. While talking with my Grandmother over the week-end, she noted how weather patterns have changed over the past few years. She has spoken of how she's found flowers growing

directions while watching leaves blow along the roof line of our home. It seemed weird to me; but after talking to Grandma later that evening, I had my confirmation. All I can say is: God is in control. Yet still, I don't want to be someone who can read the weather patterns but not

Old Sailor's adage: "Red in the morning, sailor take warning. Red at night, sailor's delight!"

in her garden that she never planted; and how the wind sometimes blows in all directions at the same time. In her words, "It's strange to feel the wind coming from one direction and see the clouds moving in another." Because she still spends a fair amount of time in her garden despite being a centenarian, I know that if it ain't right to her, IT AIN'T RIGHT! I noticed the changing wind

the sign of the times. Let's pray for discernment in all things.

Speaking of Grandma, our favorite movie to watch is *Sergeant York*. Well, I told Grandma that I have another story that may even eclipse that one. She'll love it. I was so moved when I saw it in the movie theater that I clapped when it was finished. I would have

A Word on the Electoral College



The idea that institutions established for the use of the nation cannot be touched nor modified even to make them answer their end because of rights gratuitously supposed in those employed to manage them in trust for the public, may perhaps be a salutary provision against the abuses of a monarch but is most absurd against the nation itself. Yet our lawyers and priests generally inculcate this doctrine and suppose that preceding generations held the earth more freely than we do, had a right to impose laws on us unalterable by ourselves, and that we in like manner can make laws and impose burdens on future generations which they will have no right to alter; in fine, that the earth belongs to the dead and not the living." --

Thomas Jefferson to William Plumer, 1816.

stood up but I didn't want to look like a total anomaly in the somewhat crowded theater. ☺ It's Mel Gibson's [Hackshaw Ridge](#). I LOVED IT!! Just watching the trailer gives me goose bumps. Don't get me wrong: I hate war and some scenes were difficult to watch. But what this man does on the battlefield in the

face of imminent death is nothing short of miraculous. I told Grandma that if there was EVER an angel on the battlefield, it was him. I can't wait for the DVD to come out so I can buy it for her! Check it out!! For real! It's a must see!

Well, this month's issue is a little late but, no worries.

Arriving in a pinch is better than not arriving at all! ☺ I explain why we're so tardy a little later. Suffice it to say that my muse found me rather late in the game. But when she came, the outpouring was fast and furious. I'm rather content with the outcome. I hope you are too. ☺

Musings on Life in America

Food for Thought

Well, 2016 is coming to a rapid close with the promise of a dawning new day. I've heard several people say that they'll be happy to see the end of 2016. Concerns have been raised about governance, justice, equity, tolerance, war, immigration, alienation and so much more. Let's be real: These are the same issues that peoples of all ages throughout history have fought over. I'm not sure if there's a formula for the "right way" of doing things in a dualistic world. God guides with wisdom and with love, and we decipher with and into abject ignorance. As long as people have opinions, one can think of a different way of doing what another believes is the absolute *right way* of being. It's not malice, it's a house divided.

Such is the nature of duality. We live in a paradoxical world. When the unstoppable force meets the immovable object, what happens? Which one should have relented and which one was "right" in its beingness? Surely, love beckons that we move out of our comfort zones and compromise. But, how do we navigate a pathway of compromise in an egocentric, individualistic minded world where opinions and perceptions are shaped by life circumstances which are as numerous as the stars in the night sky? When individuals are taught to see [self as separate and apart from unity](#), we must and will invariably have conflict, [as love's divine flow is stymied](#). So, perhaps this is the only truth that we will ever know on the Earth plane. Yet, we aspire...

For a more concrete example of this living paradox, the abortion issue is a hot button one. After the election, my co-worker asked me to pray with her about this issue (among others), as her church members were now divided in a way they had not been before. Most people who consider themselves true Christians are Pro-Life. Yet, a Catholic nun's response to many of these believers cut at the heart of the hypocrisy within the Christian Church....an ongoing battle. *We must have faith, love!:*

"I do not believe that just because you're opposed to abortion, that that makes you pro-life. In fact, I think in many cases, your morality is deeply lacking if all you want is a child born but not a child fed, not a child educated, not a child housed. And why would I think that you don't? Because you don't want any tax

money to go there. That's not pro-life. That's pro-birth. We need a much broader conversation on what the morality of pro-life is."

Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B.

Scripture goes so far as to speak of the deception of those who [despise government](#). It is not surprising to me that many modern translations of this text are re-worded to read "despise authority" rather than "despise government." Such is the invisible hand of Mammon. (*Yes, I said it!*) The Word goes on to say that these [false prophets who make merchandise of you will be punished for their greed](#). Sister Chittister's comments speak precisely to the heart of government and governance; as, many would condemn a child and family to abject poverty rather than to be taxed a cent more for the collective good. The slogan "get the government off our backs" is an infamous battle cry of the privileged and the *propheteers* (pun intended!) who in effect make merchandise of the poor and dispossessed. When we privatize, why should we trust the welfare of widows and orphans to merchants?

Conversely, I am not a fan of big government. Such is the nature of duality. *Sigh*. As a business owner, I understand the disdain for those who are privileged in their own comfort as *employees of the state*; and yet, forget those for whom they are employed to serve!! On a more personal note, established natural hair salons have suffered over the years by misguided legislation and quick fix solutions that were no fix at all; only a hindrance to those with the bravery to take risk. In the end, profits have been eroded. But, the collective good (meaning the public health and safety) was the purpose and priority of the legislation. So, I've never bristled at the change. But when legislative work became more challenging than anticipated, it's the quick fix solutions that eroded the public health and remain only an aspiration to this day. Such is the nature of life. But, public safety is not something that we should feel comfortable compromising on. When children and young people are gunned down in streets, synagogues and schools under the sponsorship of corrupt political action committees with power and profit motives (i.e. NRA), I know that we are gone astray. Righteousness has many facets. And as long as we're thinking of ourselves primarily, we just won't get it right. If we would draw the line of advocacy in the womb or at birth and neglect the very essence of life (i.e. living), we have proven ourselves to be *weighed in the balance and found wanting*. All the same, our hearts were in the right place...somewhat. And so, [a luta continua](#). The world is in a fierce battle against the most divine authority. Give thanks that God is merciful for we all fall short of the mark.

Several clients in the salon have confessed that they feel that we're collectively moving backwards, rather than forward in American society. But, some American voters would argue with vehemence and logic that equity and inclusion is antithetical to their very survival. So, we must celebrate tolerance, agitate for righteousness and be patient for God's time to unfold. And what do we do while we await...a beacon of light in a world of dark and light...a pathway to peace? We serve and we inspire. [But, we don't know precisely what time is God's time, when it will come, what it will look like or how it will feel](#). If I can venture a theory, [here's a neo-soul interpretation](#) of what we may anticipate to help pick up your spirits. (Psst! Volume up please, especially at 2:22. ☺) I see God absolutely EVERYWHERE!! I sure hope you do too! If not, look more deeply. They is omnipresent.

Poetically Speaking: Hope Springs Eternal

The Face of Intolerance

I've been in a rather reflective tone of late. So, what's new? ☺ There's a lot to think about. I want to see a better world but know that in my lifetime, I will see what is and nothing more. That thought brings me to tears. Yet when I see the [love, diversity and tolerance in the current generation](#), it gives me great confidence for the future!

I've thought about death and dying and rebirth and renewal. It's the natural cycle of life. After watching a video recently, I reflected deeply on the concept of [reincarnation](#). I believe the video could be a small glimpse of what awaits in the afterlife. The video conjured the image of an old school brother standing before God and saying: "Father. If I have to go back to America in the 2000s, I have to go back as a white man or I'm not going to be too happy. A brother's got too many obstacles to face down there and I'm tired of fighting an uphill battle." God's response: "Your wish is granted, my son. But, remember where you came from." And so, [he remembers](#). ☺

Life is a continuum. Death is the catalyst to transformation. The afterlife is an oxymoron. God laughs at our "knowing." But, we're growing and maturing. And that must surely be a beautiful sight to behold!

So with a full heart, a sampling of tears, and a smile of wonder, I honor our collective truth as we grow together towards divinity.

The Face of Intolerance

The face of intolerance is blurring into oblivion. Pockets of pain, discontent and anger are being infused with the discomfort of proximity and the inescapable reality of inter-connectivity, forcing the hand of fate. Abstraction is a beautiful thing.

The face of intolerance was once a celebrated diva who graced the world stage with a bewitching magnetism that lured and consumed. The world bowed at her feet as she danced. Now, she is a fallen icon, forgotten by most, celebrated by few. Obscurity is a beautiful thing.

The face of intolerance is a dying mask no longer apt to the elevated aptitude of an enlightened multitude. Gasping frantically for the final breathe of inevitability, she convulses against her new truth. Death is a beautiful thing.

In a desperate desire to live on, the outwardly projecting face of intolerance has pivoted 180 degrees. With calculated patience, she reconstructs herself. Chiseling away the blurred micro-lines, revealing a soul shrouded in a cloak of discontent. Ego-odium is a horrible thing.

The anthem of Gaia is played on the heartstrings of humanity and of nature; the melody is a reflection of our collective reality. In our quest to compete rather than cooperate, we measure, weigh and judge incessantly...and the world cries. Ever grasping, we always come up short, when instead we should release and radiate. Guard your eyes. Guard your thoughts. Guard your heart. The face of intolerance is seeking another soul to devour.

[Embrace the beauty of You...and love Me too.](#)

Loc-connaissance: How type and texture determine technique

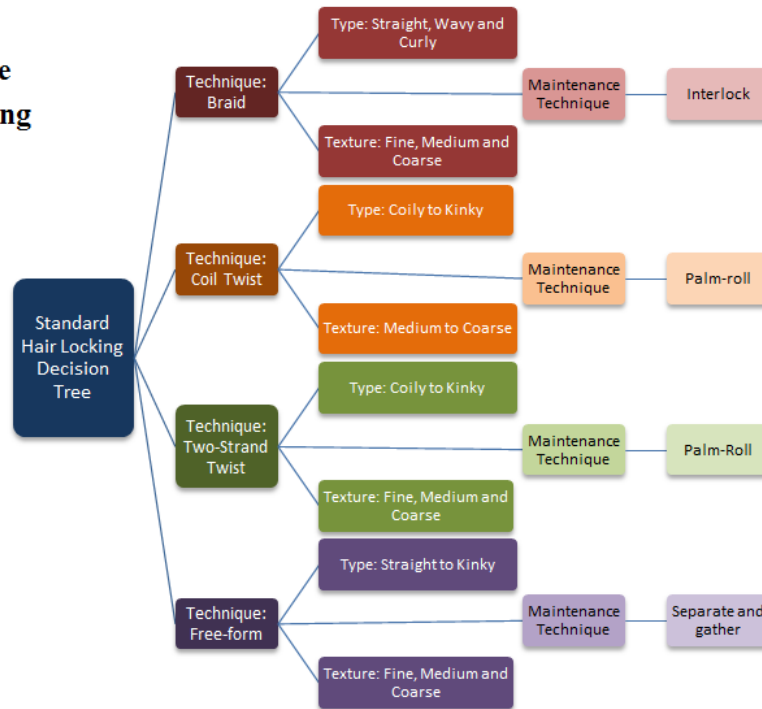
Hair-locking Tips

Inspiration is a fickle compatriot. She is elusive when we wish her to be apparent and prolific when brevity would suffice. I have greatly delayed this month's issue of Au Naturel because I just didn't know what inspiring new tidbits on natural hair care I should share. But, ask and it shall be given. While interlocking a teen's hair on Saturday, December 17th, I suddenly knew what I would write about this month. You see, I started this young woman's locks a little over a year ago. I used the standard two-strand twist technique to do so. Lock maintenance services are then typically conducted using the palm roll technique. ([Read the article titled "Loc-connaissance: Interlocking vs. Palm-rolling" for an explanation of interlocking and palm rolling techniques.](#)) After some months however, it was apparent that I needed to alter my technique to facilitate a more polished look for the client. What dictated this change was that when she returned for maintenance services, her roots were really puffy and thick. There's nothing inherently wrong with this hair reality, as it is a part of the locking process. But, this client is a high schooler. I'm always cognizant that peer acceptance is a major concern for young people at this phase of life. So, I was concerned about her overall appearance between services. Also, her habit is that she typically shampoos her hair before returning to the salon. And when palm rolled hair meets shampoo, the result is an organic one! Depending on the hair type and texture, any number can play. Natural hair do what it do! 😊

This client's hair type is considered kinky; but, the strands are rather fine. (Note: I am using the terms *type* and *texture* consistent with [Milady's Standard Cosmetology's](#) use of *wave pattern* and *texture* respectively.) Because I started her hair with a two-strand twist and have been palm-rolling during maintenance services, I switched to the interlocking technique to reduce frizz and to keep her roots as tight as possible between services and shampoos. The net effect is that when she returns for services, her locks are clearly defined down to the roots where the new growth has occurred. But to correct for starting out with the two-strand twist rather than the braid, I've since had to implement some grooming modifications to smooth out her locks. These modifications become rather obvious with time and experience; so, I won't elaborate on them here. Suffice it to say: I don't regret starting with the two-strand twist; because, braided locks are flat locks. They will become cylindrical over time; but, part of the true beauty of locks is their shape. So, I really prefer using the two-strand twist to initiate locks on a kinkier hair type over the braided technique. All the same, I don't hesitate to employ the braided technique when I need a stronger hold.

So inspired by this case example of lock decision-making, I created a standard hair locking decision tree to inform readers about how and when to use certain techniques. (See next page.) I call the tree a "standard" one because hair locking is as much an art form as a technique. There is no right answer that must be employed in all circumstances, as my own case example above illustrates. As a result, the decision tree is primarily for beginners. Other factors outside of type and texture (i.e. density, length, client age, personal style, etc.) factor into the techniques that may be used. So, be willing to make modifications as you see fit. You will often encounter clients whose locks you did not initiate; therefore, flexibility in the selection of lock techniques to employ is paramount.

Diagram: How type and texture determine locking technique



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Finally, I would like to note that within the salon setting, grooming and neatness are always of primary importance. For this reason, I have not spoken much of the free form locking technique as it is rarely used in the

salon. This method is how lock wearers like Bob Marley started their locks. In short if you shampoo your hair and opt out of combing or styling, locks will form naturally as strands bond with those around them. Many people will then separate the strands with their hands to define the size locks that they favor. Over time, they may employ the palm roll technique once the locks are formed. This method is primarily used by DIY naturalistas, as it does not require a specialist’s time and expertise. All the same, it is included in the decision tree as an acknowledgement of its legitimacy as a hair locking technique.

Contemplating the Emotional Body: The Sequel

Dreaming in Real Time

Back in the [April issue of Au Naturel newsletter](#), I wrote an article about how we as consciousness can be separate from the emotions which rage within our own beings. On the surface, some may interpret this concept as a sign of current or pending madness; but, I assure you, it’s a sign of the connectivity and unity of all things. ☺ As

an illustration, I’ll share a recent experience that occurred on Oct. 21st. When quirky things like this happen, I write them down for future reference. My notes are as follows:

On the morning of October 21st, I woke before light. I had just had a dream that I was at the Pulse Nightclub. In the dream, I had

three personas: I was a person who was at the club that night but who escaped. Then, I was a relative of a deceased person that was killed in the club. Then, I was standing inside of the club feeling the terror and panic of being totally closed in with nowhere to hide. I felt that if I ran, I would be a target. If I stood still, I would be a target. Then I was shot at pretty close

range. I dropped face down to the ground. I wondered if I should now pretend to be dead. But, then my breathing became very labored as if I was really dying. I woke up. When I arrived at work the next day, I checked the internet for the Pulse Nightclub. The [following link](#) had just been posted. FREAKY!

As this Orlando news story did not make national news, I know I couldn't have learned about this event beforehand. So, I called my Mom to try to decipher why I would have such a dream/nightmare. She encouraged me to pray for the souls of those who passed as they had not intended to die that night. So, I did. After doing so, I lost it. I cried like I myself had died there or as if I knew someone who had. It was a strange feeling, as I knew the feelings were not my own. My core being was observing a part of myself act out the sheer distress and emotion of the experience. I cried the type of tears that make you heave to catch your breath. But as part of me cried uncontrollably, another part of me asked: "Why am I not troubled by these tears? When I disconnected from the "observer self", I would cry uncontrollably all over again, never truly feeling or connecting to the feelings but expressing them in full totality.

Then, I would again observe the "experience." The only parallel I can make to how my "observer self" responded to this strange reality is reference to the scene from film *The Matrix* when [Neo stops bullets and looks at them in fascination](#). It's as if one realizes that fear, pain and anger don't define the core of who we are as beings, so you observe the separation. Fr. Richard Rohr often speaks of the "contemplative mind" but I always surmise that most people don't know what on Earth he's talking about. In short, it's the watcher within your beingness who watches you react to the machinations of life on Earth. The watcher watches with detachment yet with full empathy and understanding. It's a strange phenomenon. It has only recently come to my full awareness. But if I'm honest, I've been observing myself for some years now. It's been a path of discovery that began when I chose to [aspire to be light](#) rather than the fear and insecurity that is my *false self*. I have NOT arrived. We ever aspire. I'm not sure if everyone's ready for this journey; but, I'm guessing that if you're reading this newsletter regularly, you're primed. So, I encourage you

to read extensively those references which speak to your individual soul. I won't recommend a book list. Only that you gravitate to what your soul demands. I believe you will find what you need and will leave the rest.

Likewise, please pray for the souls of all those affected by the Pulse Nightclub tragedy. Why I dreamt of and emoted about this event in this way, I can't be sure. I can only guess that my natural abilities as an empath are becoming heightened. I've been an empath since childhood which is part of the reason I stopped watching television news while in college. We are all connected. When I felt the Pulse living nightmare at my core, only then did I fully appreciate the magnitude of what had occurred. It was more than horrific; it was the height, depth and breadth of disconnection. We as a species choose to disconnect from the realities of life that don't readily affect us. But when we do, I believe we lose the core of our divinity, resting instead in our humanity and our ignorance. "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in His sight overall." Amen.

Embrace the beauty of you.

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