



# Au Naturel

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## **SMOKIN'HOT**

**DEALS:** Call the salon at (919) 844-1933, and ask for the Dahnay or LaRhonda specials!

Also, we're offering blow-out specials for only \$50.00 every Thursday and Friday of this month!

## **New Year Greetings and Salon Updates**

Happy New Year! I pray that 2013 is a most gracious and inspiring year for us all! For me, 2012 was a challenging year—one that tested my faith considerably. My secret contemplation during some of my quiet moments was: Have I become numb and disconnected, expressing neither joy nor pain in the face of pleasure and sorrow? Have I become insensitive or lukewarm? But then a girlfriend told me that my concern was unfounded, as peace and emotional balance in the face of life's ups and downs is a sign of growth. I sure hope she's right. But, what I learned about myself through the year was that my faith is stronger than I realized. I also realized that rest and peaceful separation from the routine structure of life is rejuvenating and essential to long-term sustainability. During a welcome break, there were no hair appointments to schedule, no proposal revisions pending...only the moment. And then, it's gone...

My family's mountain retreat was a restful one that was well worth the investment. When I reflect on the experience, the memory that stands out most, aside from valuable time with family and friends, was listening to the rain. It rained much of the time there. Had it been a bit colder, we would have seen at least a foot of snow. So with plenty of blankets to stay warm, we opened the windows and listened to the sound of the rain falling on the leaves and the roof. It was calming. I recall a conversation with my father years ago in which he expressed his love for the sound of rain on a tin roof. Having lived in the Caribbean, I knew exactly what he was referring to. It is a divine symphony! And one of the simple pleasures that I've missed since returning to the US. I also recall living in a Jamaican thatch-roofed cottage and having the rain fall through the leaking roof and right into my eye while I was sleeping! That's life in a developing country and in some of our own mountain shanty towns. But the beauty of the rain is a blessing to be had by all. In the States, the sound of rain falling often must filter through mounds of roofing and insulation. You can open the windows but, the magnificence of the experience can be notably dulled. But in the mountains, it was serene, peaceful and inviting. There were no sounds other than the steady rhythmic cadence of water droplets. This sound is amplified when the nights are pitch black. Living in urbanized areas, we forget what darkness looks like, as we regularly experience light pollution from nearby streets, neighborhoods and buildings. Find a cabin in the woods and remember what darkness is! And so with opened windows, I listened and drifted into a deep slumber with crisp mountain air punctuating every breath. Heaven is all around us, when we take the time to appreciate it. [Listen](#).

**Back here in the salon to start off the New Year, we have some SMOKIN' HOT SPECIALS!! These deals are so hot, I won't say what they are. Just call the salon and ask for the LaRhonda or Dahnay special and get the surprise of your life! This deal is so sweet; it's for a very limited time only, so call now! We're also offering \$50 specials on blow-outs for every Thursday and Friday of this month!**

Since the start of this new year, we've had some pretty lively discussions in the salon. That's honestly one of the joys of working in a salon. You get to hear open, honest debates about news and current events of interest to clients. One topic that has surfaced and re-surfaced is the movie *Django Unchained*. This theme has prompted more intense discussion of Kerry Washington and her new show *Scandal*. I won't elaborate on those conversations because sometimes, "what's said in the salon should stay in the salon." After all, where else do women get to *let their hair down*, literally and figuratively, without worrying about the repercussions? I don't really watch nighttime dramas much because I'm often engaged in other things. But I made the mistake of watching *Scandal* one time, and now, I'm hooked. It's edgy and very well done. But as for *Django*, I've decided to put pen to paper to share some of my own thoughts about the movie. I wrote this article about a week before printing this issue and was pleasantly surprised that some ladies shared my views. Others had different and equally insightful thoughts of their own. Whether you choose to see the movie is surely a personal decision, but I don't think you'll be disappointed...if you're not too uptight. Enjoy!

Finally, I've concluded this issue with part II of my interview with Shaundrelle Todd—a natural sister living in Thailand. Part I is printed in the [November issue of Au Naturel](#), so if you haven't yet read it, you'll want to catch up to give context to this continuation. Happy Reading!

### Why Django Unchained is a "Must-See"...at least for me



Recently, my husband and I made a rather impromptu visit to see [Django Unchained](#) and I, for one, was pleasantly surprised. So, Saturday while styling clients in the salon, my main question

immediately following New Year greetings is: "Have you seen Django?" The responses were consistently "No." And then I went into the whys of wherefores of seeing it. Our most loyal and consistent client mentioned to me why she has difficulty with movies that have a strong slave theme. I can totally relate and proceeded to assure her that this film is different!

While driving with my husband to the commuter bus stop early the following Wednesday morning, he told me about a conversation on the same topic that he recently had with an NC State professor. Lloyd asked: "Have you seen Django?" He responded, "No, why should I?" Now in my view, some things shouldn't be intellectualized...just enjoyed. But when Lloyd finalized his re-cap of their conversation, I myself was inspired to record my own spin on the movie. In short, Lloyd's justification for wanting to see the film was that he's heard of some criticisms from Spike Lee about the film and from Fox News about Jamie Fox in particular. He said, "I wanted to know how Spike Lee and Fox News could wind up in the same camp!" Now, I must admit: That's an intriguing spin! Then, he spoke about how Samuel Jackson's portrayal of an Uncle-Tom like character is a metaphor for [Anansi-the spider](#)—a popular character of West African and Caribbean folklore,

who manipulates everyone for his own selfish gain. With that, our friend was sold and said he will be going to see the movie.

Well, I personally don't care why Spike Lee doesn't like the movie and could give a flying flip why Fox News is castigating Jamie Fox, though I probably know that position better than Spike's. My analysis is simplistic, fantastical and hits at the core of the Black psyche—which I will always be fascinated by. In short, I loved the movie because for the first time that I can remember in my entire (ahem) years of existence, the Black damsel gets rescued by the Black prince riding on a white horse (I personally would have preferred a black horse but, I appreciate that the average viewer would have totally missed the symbolism.); and it's done in a way that is consistent with our American history, legacy and culture. It's totally believable and yes fantastical too! In the film, the Black damsel is strong but weak. That's classic Romance ladies!! Romance novels are top sellers because the authors know what few will admit: Every woman secretly wants to be rescued. (Okay, I just lost a few people. That's cool. They're in denial. ☺) I'm not referring to the type of rescue that leaves the heroine weak and needy. I mean the type of rescue that acknowledges that NO ONE can go it alone; and at the end of the day, you just want someone to *have your back* no matter how difficult life gets and will be willing to put it all the line for you without hesitation. In this movie, the Black heroine is the most beautiful, the most virtuous and the most intellectual woman on the set...and the most abused. Call her Cinderella. When she's told by the White male supporting lead that she's beautiful—a rarity in Hollywood films and I've been tracking this phenomenon for a while now, you believe it! It's obvious. This occurrence, though seemingly trivial, is not to be taken lightly. Tarantino realizes this fact and made sure the obvious was stated clearly for all to ingest. The fairy god-father is a Jewish bounty hunter who is rather stereotypically hell-bent on claiming his "pound of flesh" or should I say "pound for flesh"; and he makes no bones about it. Yet, he has such deep compassion and generosity in his heart that he is willing to risk everything to help his friend. The fairytale-like storyline is further undergirded by a strong evil villain, Samuel Jackson, who is brilliant in the role and brings a comedic punch to his portrayal that is effortlessly hilarious!! Overall, it makes for a rather entertaining cast of characters.

As for Tarantino, I must admit that I am not ordinarily a fan. I love Asian-theme films but when I saw "Kill Bill," I was THROUGH!—way too much blood and gore for me. I put Tarantino on my "don't do" list. But, I've admittedly grown to cozy up to him a little more after seeing "Sin City." Well a few weeks back, I saw "[Man with the Iron Fists](#)" and I had officially placed Tarantino on my "watch" list—meaning cautious optimism. I thought, "Wow, the Black man is the hero in Asia. Pretty dope!!!" But then, RZA of the [Wu-Tang Clan](#) wrote and directed it so, it shouldn't be that surprising. The storyline is classic Asian drama. LOVED IT!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Yes, it was gory; Asian films often are. But, Tarantino really does make a science of gore. That's my primary critique of him as an artist. But as my son Jamar says, "that's his trademark. It's what sets him apart." Indeed, it does! But honestly, he toned the blood and gore down in *Django*. He could truly have gone further left than he did; so I salute him for exercising considerable restraint, which I'm sure was not easy for him. ☺ With that said, the movie is quite profane so don't take the kids. Also, the rather liberal use of the "N-word" is poignant from the outset. But after ten minutes into the plot, I was so engrossed in the developing storyline that the word seemed strangely necessary, authentic to the time and as natural as "mornin'".

Overall, I must confess that I'm a sucker for a good Western. If it's got a Westerner edge to it, "I'm your huckleberry." (Classic line from Val Kilmer's portrayal of Doc Holliday in my favorite Western of all times: "[Tombstone](#).") So, I was clearly pre-

### **Food for Thought:**

*In life, sometimes we feel past our prime, powerless, irrelevant or even incapable of effecting meaningful impact in the lives of others. In reality, we are "powerful beyond measure" and MOST RELEVANT! A source of inspiration, a wellspring of truth and boundless positive energy is a fountain of youth, an invaluable gem and a beautiful blessing to the world! Be the blessing, my dear friend; this is sufficient. And while you travel on your way, what a joy to cherish a moment to dream or doodle or laugh or play with inspiration! ☺ These are the moments that color our journey with vibrant colors and fortify us to sing with resolve—even when our pathway is uncertain or constrained. Love IS. We ARE. The universe smiles. These are our gifts. Amen.*

disposed to like "Django Unchained" anyway. Only, we'd have to call it a South-western. ☺ That wild west flavor coupled with non-stop action, brilliant character portrayals and a classic Hollywood storybook ending, made the movie worth every minute of the almost three hours invested. Besides when a writer/director can turn a KKK scene into the funniest scene in a movie, I must bow to the true brilliance and genius of a master cinematographer. This scene is truly brilliantly done! If we don't laugh at the madness and lunacy of our collective history while also analyzing, critiquing and learning from it, how will we EVER get over it!!! Note: I said NOTHING about forgetting it! American history is what it is. But, the Phoenix rises. And I for one have grown tired of movies with Black people so beat down psychologically and otherwise that the most we can hope for is escape or some brave suicide mission for the sake of honor and glory. NO! Tarantino dares to be bold! In this film, yes our hero escapes through grace, greed, guts and even superior intellect. But, he doesn't go home with his tail between his legs and give thanks for another day. He goes back for his prize: his wife. And he does so standing tall, while kickin' 'nuff \_\_\_\_\_ to make it happen. Move over Dirty Harry!! There's a new Eastwood in town!! The name is Fox, Jamie Fox! Or should I say "Django, the 'D' is silent." As for my girl Kerry Washington, "Rock on, my sister! Do that thang!!" You're fast becoming one of my favorites!

## **A Natural Sister Takes a Plunge in the Foothills of Thailand – Part II**



*In the November 2012 issue of Au Nature!, I began an interview with Shaundrelle Todd—a natural sister from Zebulon, NC who is currently residing in Thailand. I have known Shaundrelle for over six years, and I never cease to be amazed at her boundless energy and her zest for life. Please reference the November issue for part I of this interview to learn about what prompted Shaundrelle to begin travels outside of the US. The text below is the continuation of our discussion:*

**Schatzi:** So Shaundrelle, being so far from home, family and culture, how do you deal with solitude, isolation or loneliness?

**Shaundrelle:** Being here, I've become closer to nature. The Thai life is that you live outside 70% of the day and 30% is indoors mainly to sleep. I also ride a motorbike everywhere I go. So being in the elements connects you to what life is about. It's about you and God. And at the end of the day, when I am sad, I reach out to my friends in America and my family, but I also get on my motorbike and drive into

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nature. And I say thank you because I see life from a different set of eyes. We're always told, you come into this world alone and you leave it alone. People say it all the time. But they don't accept what they're saying. Because if you accept that, it pulls you away from what's unnecessary and grounds you in yourself and your emotions. God knows I never thought I would have to be so grounded. It wasn't my mission but, it is my journey.

**Schatzi:** I feel you. We're all grounded in the space that we find ourselves in.

**Shaundrelle:** The experience also makes me appreciate what a real friendship is and a real relationship. I accept people for who they are and accept the relationship that we do or don't have. And that, I'm grateful for. I have some priceless friends in my life and being here is showing me whose for real and whose not. People hide behind technology and live a lie. I'm not interested in that. I value real relationships.

**Schatzi:** Why have you settled in Thailand, Shaundrelle?

**Shaundrelle:** I settled in Thailand because their culture and mine as an African-American woman are very similar as it relates to family values and morals. They are a conservative society but they believe in celebrations and celebrating life. There have been many days when I reflect on how we are not that different. I look at some of them and I see an American Indian woman. Or, I see my grand-mother in their faces. I also see a people who have been allowed to be free. To be themselves. They are Thai people and this is their country. As an African-American female, I didn't know what freedom felt like until I came here. I feel it every day I wake up.

**Schatzi:** Could you more elaborate on what you mean?

**Shaundrelle:** I'm not sure I know how to. In Thai culture, they're such open and loving people. They want to feed you; they want you to interact with your family. They may not know you, but they want to welcome you. When you try to understand their language and culture, other doors open up. Doors of acceptance. They are open, caring and honest. That is their freedom. Also, Thai people understand that they have a sixth sense and are taught to use it. Children know what it is. Whereas in America, we are taught we don't have one and if you think you do, don't try to put it into practice. Here, it is the sixth sense that continuously opens doors for me and allows me to feel safe all the time. Is that a reflection of the people and the land or is it a reflection of the peace that I have within me? I don't know.

Also, because I am an American citizen and female with a similar skin color as Thai people, I will dare to say it opens up another set of doors for me. So living here, I have had to put in perspective that as an American, I have certain advantages in the world, and I'm grateful for them. It's not a perfect society and there are issues re: skin color, etc. The vast majority of skin products have whitening agents in them because they're obsessed with being lighter. This is largely because China has such a strong influence. Chinese people in Thailand have money; so, the whiter you are, the more money you have. Because I'm American, I'm expected to have money despite my skin color.

**Schatzi:** This is a global phenomenon Shaundrelle, prompted primarily by imperialism. When I traveled to South Africa in the late 80s, I had a mirror experience to your own, in some respects. I resided in a shanty town for almost a month. I felt the freedom of the people there as well. Despite the fact that it was apartheid South Africa, there was

a beauty, sincerity and indomitable spirit that I saw in the people that I felt must come from being born on the same land that hundreds of generations of your people occupied. They were loving, open and absolutely beautiful. I was given the name Nontsikelelo (which means blessed) because I was basically a “child” who was able to travel the world of my own accord. Yes, American citizenship does give us some advantages. But sadly, I saw many women whose beautiful features were stained by the excessive use of bleaching agents which can form dark spots when repeatedly exposed to sunlight. Prayerfully, this skin color bias will self-correct over time, through enlightenment and exposure to truth. Time is on our side.

So far, what is the most valuable lesson that you have learned from your travels about life, about people and about yourself?

**Shaundrelle:** I think when people are allowed to be who they have been born to be, living in a land full of love is a reality. People are love and people love to love. So when they are not told they can't do certain things, when they're not restrained, love and trust is not an issue. It's innate within us.

**Schatzi:** Indeed, it is.

**Shaundrelle:** And I find that in our society, we are told that you can't trust people. I'm finding that I have to relearn how to trust myself in knowing that it's okay to listen and follow my instincts. It's okay to be the epitome of love and allow others to love me as I love them. I'm learning unconditional love here. I'm learning what unconditional love is. And we don't speak the same language, but I feel it. The freedom I feel in Thailand is the freedom to live in a land where we don't speak the same language but we speak the same language: That language is love.

**Schatzi:** Beautifully said, Shaundrelle. Thanks for sharing. If there is one "word of wisdom" that you could give to the readers of this newsletter, what would it be?

**Shaundrelle:** It would be life does have its challenges. We all go through ups and downs. But no matter where you are, you can't be afraid to live.

**Schatzi:** This concludes our interview. One thing that I can say about you Shaundrelle: you grab life by the horns and ride it with enthusiasm. I love that about you! I once heard your Dad say: “You can drop my girls anywhere in the world, and they'll be alright! I taught them that!” You're a living testimony to the veracity of his words. I love you, girl. You know that. 😊 We'll talk again soon.

## **About Us**

As the first natural hair salon in Raleigh, NC, *Schatzi's* is a *one-stop shop* for all of your natural hair care needs. With a warm and nurturing ambiance for clients to “Embrace the Beauty of You,” *Schatzi's* is located in the Park on Millbrook Condominium complex, on W. Millbrook Rd.

*Schatzi's* design gallery provides services that nurture natural hair with talented stylists who are happy to guide you through and beyond the transition process. Our two-floor art gallery is provided courtesy of local artist Jasmine Hawthorne.

*Au Naturel* newsletter, an essential part of our information sharing services, is a wondrous labor of love that is a joy to create and a gift to you our valued clients and to the public at large.