



# Au Naturel

JULY 3, 2009

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## Community Events

- **Healthful Eating Class** – Ms. Nyoni Collins, a dietician and regular of *Schatzi's* is hosting free cooking consultations on the first Saturday of the month throughout the summer. The first session however will be on Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> due to the 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday. These free consultations are from 10am-12pm and 1-2:30pm. Please call 554-1799 for more information.
- **Customer Appreciation Month is August 2009** – As such, we will have customer appreciation events on each Saturday throughout the month:
  - August 8 – Aromatherapy Party with Roxanne London
  - August 15 – Skin Care Consultations with Andrea Richardson
  - August 22 – Yoga and Fitness Day with Tameika Vick
  - August 29 – Hair Show Mix & Mingle

## A Tribute to Life and to a Beautiful Man

*This tribute began during the wee hours of July 1<sup>st</sup>. It began in sadness, mellowed into thoughtful reflection, was stoked into a smoldering anger and has concluded with a silent peace. I had to say what is written here. The story is long and protracted. The message is a controversial one but is primarily one of deliverance: "Embrace the Beauty of You." Read and know your own truth. (Photo from [www.mjpictures.com](http://www.mjpictures.com))*

### On Life

Over the past week, I must confess that I have lived in a type of funk that I can't seem to shake. It comes no doubt as a result of the untimely death of the greatest Pop genius ever to grace the airwaves, Michael Joseph Jackson. I had absolutely refused to cry over his death as I believe that in death, he has been released from a lifetime of suffering. But during the wee hours of July 1<sup>st</sup>, the dam broke and I broke that pledge. I have grappled with the need to understand why I should place so much importance on a single human being. Since his death, I have dreamt of him and I have prayed for his soul. I have cried out of a sense of helplessness as I believe that love is the greatest gift known to Man. It is a gift that he shared freely with the world only to be chastised and abused for his innocence and his trusting nature. It is a testimony to the nature of human beings to take for granted that which is gifted to us...until it is no more. It's a rather humbling commentary on our state of being.

The past week has been very humbling to me particularly in defining the extent to which life is precarious and fragile. A friend always outlined that truth to me but since June 21<sup>st</sup>, I have felt it more deeply than at any other time in life that I can recall. The circumstances surrounding my week will help you understand why.

On Father's Day 2009, I traveled to Maryland to attend a four-day conference for early intervention programs. I caught the plane in RDU at about 6:10pm. While on the plane, I reviewed the in-flight magazine and observed an article on infomercial king Billy Mays. I passed the article and continued on. But, something compelled me to turn back and read it. It was interesting. I moved on. When I arrived at Reagan National Airport, I decided to take the DC Metro into Bethesda to better feel the heartbeat of the city. I asked directions, took the yellow line and then transferred to the red line to be deposited practically at the doorsteps of my hotel. It was an enjoyable ride. All the same, I couldn't shake the feeling "What if we crash?" I dismissed the thought as having any real meaning as I had seen a television show a few days before in which two trains collided due largely to human error. I guessed that the visual images of destruction were planted in my mind for that reason so I focused on arrival at my destination. I departed the Metro at about 8:25pm an avid fan of the DC commuter rail system.

On Monday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, after a day of conference sessions, I touched base with my husband about meeting with him at my aunt's home in DC. (He was working in DC on a short-term project and was staying with her.) I said, "I can take the Red line and transfer to the appropriate train near my aunt's home." He dismissed the idea and said he'd pick me up. He did and we arrived at my aunt's home later that evening. Imagine my shock upon reaching her home to learn that there had been a terrible accident just that evening on the inward bound Red Line. I thought about the haunting thoughts "What if we crash?" that I had throughout yesterday's ride. It was a little too ironic for my liking. We watched the news the remainder of the evening and that night I slept fitfully.

*"We should feel free to share laughter and love with a stranger as much as we share it with our loved ones who we see everyday."*

Tuesday evening, after another day of conferences, I turned on the television to learn more about the accident and to hope that the casualties were limited. By Wednesday morning, they had the faces of the victims on the television. I promptly changed the channel. Somehow I didn't want to be reminded how close we all are to our passing. I then recall hearing a vague reference to Ed McMahon and again I changed the channel. I proceeded to the day's conference sessions. By lunchtime, I had met a colleague who was a joy and treat to be around. We shared lunch and I felt very happy to have made her acquaintance. By evening, I had linked up with another wonderful colleague who I believe I was destined to meet. I had seen her at a past conference and decided it was time to introduce myself. We began talking at around 5pm and finished after 10, having shared a vegetarian dinner and endless stories. She is indeed a kindred spirit. By Thursday morning, I was eager to link up with my two new friends and to hear what else I needed to learn from the "Feds." I made introductions between the two ladies and we enjoyed lunch and more pleasantries. By the afternoon, we all had a date to meet up on Columbus Day week-end in Oklahoma at the ranch-home of the first. I felt very excited about the newness and blessings of life. It is indeed a river.

In reflecting on our future date to meet in Oklahoma City, I thought how spontaneous and rich a decision it was. I thought of the days of America's youth when people traveled westward on the harsh frontier and solicited aid, food and lodging from complete strangers with no thought of the appropriateness of it all. It was essential to life. But somehow as we become more technologically advanced, we become more socially inept...choosing to chat with invisible strangers on the other side of the world rather than to visit with our own next door neighbors. So in reflection, I sense that our current way of life is a little too guarded. Sure there is reason for caution but life is precarious. We should feel free to share laughter and love with a stranger as much as we share it with our loved ones who we see everyday. For in the words of Michael Jackson:

"We are the world. We are the children.  
We are the ones who make a brighter day [by giving]."  
And in making this choice to love freely "We save our own lives" and salvage all of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

I left my new friends at about 2:30pm preparing to take the shuttle back to the airport. I honestly didn't have the spirit to ride the Metro, though I had been advised it was operational and safe. I was glad for the solitude and the directness of the shuttle. I could take some time to read the book that one of the ladies had placed in my hand that same day, The Alchemist. When I arrived at the airport during the 4 o'clock hour, I cleared security and walked to my gate. While passing television monitors, I vaguely heard reference to "Farrah Fawcett loses her battle with cancer." I didn't want to feel the spirit of mourning or see the ever-present reminder of what a difference a day makes, so I went to the far side of the airport and sat in front of a window looking out on the runway. It was secluded and peaceful. I then dived into The Alchemist and began to appreciate the power of Paulo Coelho's storytelling. At about 6:00pm on the money, I landed at RDU airport. I walked to my car, put in my bags, started the car and headed out. I heard a Michael Jackson song playing on the radio. I paid my parking fee and heard another MJ song begin. "Hmm. They're playing Michael Jackson songs today." I then heard the DJ say "What song would you like for me to play in memory of Michael Jackson." I thought "Hmm. Why would they say *in memory of* a person whose living? That's weird!!!" The song played. Another caller. "In memory of Michael Jackson, I'd like you to play \_\_\_\_." I then became concerned and disturbed. I honestly don't remember driving home. I was enraptured in the moment. I thought "Schatzi, you haven't seen the news for a few hours.... Call somebody!" I picked up the phone and called my husband Lloyd. "Hey, I've arrived in Raleigh. I'm on the way home." "Good, he said. Have you heard that Michael Jackson died?" And there it was. What I didn't want to hear but surely knew. I got home, checked in with my kids, had dinner and watched the news. Despite my best effort to avoid seeing the difference a day makes, it was now not to be ignored.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Jackson, "We Are the World", Polygram Records, 1985.

*"...life is a river; it brings blessings and pain."*

Friday, I worked in a type of depression and was truly relieved when the day was over. Saturday was more news and more tributes as was Sunday. Only Sunday greeted me with a visit from my sister Jasmine. She came up to my room, sat on the bed and said "Did you hear that Billy Mays died?" I then thought, "You've got to be kidding." She said "No, and recited the circumstances surrounding his death." I thought "Why did I read that article on the plane that I wasn't really interested in, particularly as I've never had any real interest in Billy Mays, the man?" Again, it all felt a bit weird for my liking. I watched an interview in which he spoke to reporters just the day before his death and there it was again: the reminder of what a difference a day makes. Jasmine and I talked and I later reflected on the importance of living and loving freely. I also considered the idea that television is not always a good thing. We bring the world into our homes and our lives and experience the joys and pains of celebrities as if they were our own. When they die, we feel as though we've lost a valued friend when in truth, these people were never intimately known by us. In a way, we wind up living in an eternal state of mourning. At least, that's my opinion. But as earlier stated, life is a river; it brings blessings and pain. It brings people into and out of our lives. Ed McMahon, Farrah Fawcett, Billy Mays and Michael Jackson came into the river's current at different points in time but their souls transitioned into the ocean of the universe together. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, my dear friend Andrea Perry gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in Kingston, Jamaica. And the circle of life continues.

### ***On the Man***

Of the four celebrities, Michael Jackson is the one that influenced my life most...not surprisingly. I am a product of my generation. He influenced us all. His life was as charmed as it was controversial. I've thought considerably about the aspects of his life that were made public. And in reflecting, I thought 'what's in a name?' Is it totally coincidental that Michael Jackson was named after an archangel or was it divinely appointed? I ask the question because in many ways, Michael was like an angel—a messenger. Through his work, Michael Jackson delivered a message of healing with "Heal the World," love with "You are not alone," stewardship with "Earth Song," self-confidence with "Bad," honesty with "Billie Jean," reconciliation with "Beat It," acceptance with "Black or White," wonder with "Human Nature" and innocence with "Childhood." He delivered his message with banging guitar lines, a resounding bass, timeless melodies and indelible visual images that will make it impossible for us to forget the message for many decades to come.

*"...like a child, Michael spoke the truth about how we feel about ourselves more effectively and more publicly than anyone ever could."*

But like the universal yin and yang symbol, all goodness has a shadowy side much like a "double-edged sword." And like an avenging angel, Michael had another message to deliver that was equally provocative and telling. To understand the message, we need to understand the heart of the man. In short, I saw in Michael Jackson a man who truly had the heart and innocence of a child. Generally speaking, children do not lie and they do not scheme. They reflect truth and honesty in word and deed. So in Michael Jackson, I saw a man who reflected truth and dared to show all the world what Black America really thinks of itself. He was a reflection of our collective will and desire—to emulate Whiteness. In reflecting on the recent interviews and tributes that I have seen, I ask myself why did Quincy Jones speak of chastising Michael's chemical peels (if that's what they were) when he himself has been married (and divorced) three times but never to a woman of color? I don't criticize him because he knows what he likes. But then, so did Michael. Why should we reprimand his choice to burn or bleach his skin blond when we do the same thing with our hair on a daily basis? Why should we criticize his nose when we joke on wide nostrils as if they are a judgment of damnation from God himself? Why should we condemn the straightening of his hair when we burn our own children's hair for the sake of "convenience?" Who are we to judge and criticize the choices Michael Jackson made? It is often said that "Children say that damndest things." Well like a child, Michael spoke the truth about how we feel about ourselves more effectively and more publicly than anyone ever could. We were embarrassed by his message. But he spoke loudly and clearly as any child does when our very soul begs them to "Be quiet!" His message was no less true because we chose to separate it from us. We were strongly opposed to his message because we saw the mirror reflection of our own thoughts and idiosyncrasies. I recall as a child living in Alabama during the 70s, looking in the mirror and

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wondering what its like to be White. Well, Michael Jackson had the same wonderment but he also had the self-awareness, the strength of purpose and the money to "Make it so!" I've long outgrown such musings but how many of us still have this emulation buried deep within our psyche? How many? Instead of hearing his message for the truth that it was, we disassociated ourselves from the message and the messenger by saying "Hmmm, he got issues." Yes, he had issues. But if you truly believe that we collectively don't have very deep issues about skin color, hair texture and Afrocentric features, you are living in the "Outer Limits." I encourage you to *come back to the middle* as my girl India would say. You will find the center much more balanced and truthful. What's in a name indeed!

How utterly poetic then that he in turn should be named Joseph. Why? Because Biblically, Joseph was a man who had a coat (*i.e. covering, skin*) of many colors. In all the history of Mankind, what man has had a "coat" with more colorings than Michael Joseph Jackson? It's a fascinating parallel, really. Taken further, the Biblical Joseph was a man who was sold into slavery. Who would deny that despite the lure and glory of fame and fortune, Michael Joseph Jackson was a man enslaved within the confines of his own home...condemned to remain isolated from an adoring and ever-growing fan base...denied the freedom to live as common people...trapped by the shackles of contracts, lawsuits and *green-eyed monsters*? Yet despite Joseph's condition, he used his God-given talents to deliver the same family that sold him into slavery from poverty and starvation. He was their "hero." And in delivering them, he worked also to "heal the world." How absolutely poetic was the very selection of his name? What's in a name indeed! Michael Joseph Jackson—a name fashioned especially for him, setting in motion a legacy so unique and awesome that it appears to have been written in the stars.

Yes, Michael Joseph Jackson was that "angel" with the double-edged sword who committed his heart to healing the world while inside his own heart was breaking. And in the end, it did. When the depth of these thoughts connected with my spirit, I cried. That's what it took for me to lose my battle with sobriety and cry for this gentle soul from the depths of my own. My heart is still in mourning over his personal sacrifice. On Sunday afternoon, I dreamt that I gave Michael Jackson the hug and the love that I could not give him in life. All I recall of the dream was holding him tightly. I saw only his back as I caressed him. His face and color were irrelevant and unseen by me. I woke with some peace in my spirit. But in retrospect, I think that it was Michael's spirit that came to console me because he is now free and at peace. It is my soul that continues on this human plane with all of the joys and foibles of human existence, grappling with the mysteries of life which are irrelevant to the angels and the souls of our ancestors.

In summary, I feel that in his own way, Michael Jackson has highlighted more than anyone else could the importance of the statement "Embrace the Beauty of You." It is fundamental. It is life and joy and peace and happiness. On Saturday morning while watching the *CBS Early Show*, I saw a little 5<sup>th</sup> grader singing a song written, played and choreographed by her teacher. I then said to my husband "She is why Michael Jackson had to die. Why I must die. She is life and renewal—a fresh start." Her sound was captivating and belied the 11-12 years of her existence (much as Michael's did some 40 years before). She sang with command and passion. Michael's legacy was complete and now the baton has passed to the youth. We pray that their pain and struggles are not as deep as his/ours have been.

So, I salute you Michael Joseph Jackson for all that you gave in this life. To further celebrate your life's work, our August 29<sup>th</sup> Hair Show will be a wonderful reminder to "Embrace the Beauty of You." We will usher the night in and usher it out with the soulful lyrics and music of the man named after an archangel, Michael Joseph Jackson. May he forever rest in the peace that he did not have in life. We celebrate his life and his legacy. Thank you for bringing so much joy to so many. Thank you for holding up the "mirror" and reminding us to look at ourselves first. I accept you Michael. All of you. The Black and the White; the troubled and the self-assured. You are a reflection of my own soul. Thank you for reminding to me to be gentle with myself and with all the world. Somehow, I know that you hear me.

Schatzi H. McCarthy  
July 2, 2009

