



Au Naturel

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Giving thanks...not just on Thanksgiving

Well, another month has passed and the world of humanity is changed forever. But nature maintains as she always does. The autumn leaves are as beautiful as they always were. She doesn't seem to care about our stresses and insecurities. Nature knows that God provides and rests in that knowing with confidence and assurance. Humans stress and strain and wonder and surmise and fret. I am not one who is fretting at the end of this election cycle. As [Dave Chappelle so eloquently states](#), we as Black people are quite accustomed to adversity. So, we'll just wait to see what the new regime brings. Meantime, we must maintain. That is a very small thing to do when compared to the civilians in Aleppo and Mosul who are being bombed as we speak. How can I be dissatisfied with my world or my lot in it? I can't. And I'm not. I would however like to encourage prayer for the families in this region of the world who are being killed by bombs that our taxpaying dollars have financed. They are dying and we're crying about our Presidential selection. Our laments are warranted; however, because the next Commander-in-Chief will define foreign policy and the future of bomb detonations on behalf of America. Let's pray for wisdom. So considering the fate of other peoples of the world, the fact that the [North Carolina mountains are burning with no end in sight](#) is only a marginal disaster. I was heart-broken to learn of these fires were most likely set by arsonists. But then, drought conditions created perfect conditions. It seems pretty ironic that the [South started burning shortly after Election Day](#). That's surely an interesting omen to say the least. But while driving home on Nov. 22nd, I learned that despite over 100,000 acres being burned, the trees are as beautiful as ever!! What?! After hearing this NPR factoid, I squealed in delight and clapped my hands while driving. That was some of the best news I've heard this month!! Apparently, the ground cover is being burned while the trees remain hearty. It appears that oak trees like drought conditions. So while the pines may perish, they will spring back to full maturity within 20 years. The oaks will however still be around. I'm excited at God's grace in the midst of disaster. What a gift! All the same, I would like to see an end to the fires for the sake of the wildlife. So, I've gone into the archives to pull a familiar piece of prose that I wrote back in 2012. (It is in the Poetically Speaking section.) Please pray for a day like the one described in this piece. The fellow creatures of the forests will thank you with greater abundance and beauty and love. We give thanks.

Well, this month's issue of Au Naturel is written in the spirit of taking off our collective blinders. It's inspired by the 2016 election results. There is a lot that's in need of correction within our society. Many of us have become complacent or outright apathetic. The election shocker certainly woke some people up though. I believe that Bernie Sanders would have beat Trump; but, that's just my opinion. Perhaps now the Democratic Party will [evaluate their use of Super Delegates to assign votes to select the party's Presidential candidate](#). If they had a more "democratic" system of delegate assignment, they would have selected the more popular candidate. For example in the state of Indiana, [Sanders won the popular](#)

vote by a rather impressive margin; yet, Hillary received all of the super-delegate votes--a practice which echoed throughout the country. Likewise through the usury of the electoral college system, we all see that **America is not a true democracy**. Democracy is one man, one vote. When a minority of a population votes for one party, yet the electoral college assigns ALL of its delegates to the majority party regardless of the proportion of the votes received, we have a questionable electoral process. Coupled with the fact that Hillary took the majority vote, we can see why people feel their vote doesn't count. Our system is broken in a way which biases the political elite/insiders over the popular vote. I think God is trying to tell us something by using the most obvious and outlandish actors and methods to highlight the state of our truth. Hypocrisy is an abomination. So maybe, we've gotten what we deserve. According to my son Jamar, "Trump is the most American President ever. He got three baby mamas and is a hustler who don't pay no taxes." (He's funny like that.) If we can see the madness and continue business as usual, the next lesson to be learned may be even more severe. Maybe this is it... The last time this happened, Bush came into office and led us into a trillion dollar war in the Middle East. War trumps peace because peace is free. From my end, [I've already signed a petition to get rid of the electoral college](#). It's an archaic construct that no longer has validity or meaning, in my opinion. I can't imagine what merit it has when all votes are assigned regardless of proportionality. If proportionately is introduced, at least it would reflect the intention of the populace. We'll see what the future brings.

With that said, this newsletter's focus on "removing the blinders" is not intended to denigrate but to uplift. So, I've written a short piece and shared poems that aim to inspire. Humanity has far to go to achieve the type of world in which God intended for us to live. I have no animosity towards Donald Trump because I know he is there at God's discretion. All human beings are flawed; some more than others. So, we seek the lesson that is to be learned and pray that humanity and the world is a better place in the end. Sometimes, you have to go through hell to get to heaven. If we have to go through, let's pray that our souls will be a wonderful fragrance of praise as we exit on the other side. I personally believe that Trump will be a humbler more gracious man when God finishes with him and his stint in the White House. You don't get to leave the Earth plane without being humbled at some point in life. His character and demeanor suggests that he's long overdue. Sometimes, God elevates us to bring us low. Let's hope that the transformation will be one to make God smile. Amen.

Tolerance, love and girding up our loins



On Thursday, Nov. 17th., I left the office early to collect my car from the service maintenance shop. When I got into the car, [this is the interview that was starting on](#)

NPR. I've listened to it many times since then as I've shared it with friends, family and clients in the salon. It's important to understand what those who represent you represent. This revelation was disturbing to many and was largely the reason why [Trump disavowed the alt-right group on Nov. 22nd](#). All the same, camouflage is easy to wear as it relates to political views. We've already seen that Trump says what he needs to say. (*Aside: The Native Americans called it "speaking with forked tongue."*) If his chief strategist is affiliated with the alt-right movement, it means that he will analyze all laws and social policies with a view to strengthening the power and status of white Americans first. Yet, Nazis and KKK members are known terrorists. So, we now apparently "negotiate with terrorists." It's an interesting turn of events. If I could sway any of them in their thinking, I would show them [this video](#).

I, for one, was born with a vestige of compassion that has served me in many unusual ways over the years. I believe it is why slaves could love their slave-master despite the abuse. I'm not sure why I have this empathy; but, I can't shake it, even when I want to. **And boy have I wanted to shake it over the years!** As it relates to the current political movement, it manifests as cited below in a piece that I wrote on my phone memo pad in the wee morning hours of Nov. 11th :

When I see a white man with workman's boots, I want to give him a hug. Because with all of his railings and overtures of nationalism, who he's really angry with is the white establishment that built a system that left him behind. So is it any wonder that he would want to hitch his wagon to a star and hope for a miracle? Are they not entitled to their dreams? I do not believe that the average white nationalist aspires for my demise or others different from themselves. But it just so happens that if someone has to be on top of the dung heap, they'd rather be looking at the sky rather than someone else's armpits. In their heart of hearts, they know that Trump is unlikely to deliver on all of the promises he made; but, at least they want to give him a chance. Brexit is a European mirror image of the plight of the white working class in America. Globalization has found its Nemesis. And the seeds of discontent on both fronts are the stuff that revolutions are made of. I pray for tempered hearts, reflective minds, sober sprits and compassionate characters.

The truth is that globalization has made slaves of entire nations while filling the coffers of the global elite with riches beyond measure. Capitalism requires a body on which to feast. America feasted on the corpse of Black people for 400 years. Is it any wonder she is RICH?! It's not rocket science. When slavery was no longer palatable to the sensibilities of the elite, a global economic system which defines nations as "first" and "third" world was fashioned. And the depressed economies of the "third" world have fed the corporate bellies of the "first" world. We, you and I, feast on the discontent of our global neighbors much as the white elite feasted on the discontent of their slaves. You must travel to know this truth. Corporate barons are the new kings. But instead of enriching their "home nations", this corporate elite sit on top of the world enriching their kind and throwing crumbs and one-in-a-million-like success stories to the educated masses to suggest that "you too can rise to our place if you work hard enough." Yet the masses are so saddled by debt through planned obsolescence that they will never be anything but workers. To everyone else, they sell lottery tickets.

*When was the last time you saw a small business truly succeed? Any business built without the backing of the global elite must start out small, while the Starbucks, Sheets and Batteries Plus Bulbs of America rise en masse across the US landscape practically overnight. How is a Mom-and-Pop shop to survive? I can think of a few small businesses that are thriving. But I also know how much they owe the banks. So I question their success in the end; because ultimately, they are just workers. Their success is their capacity to earn and to employ others, thus oiling the corporate machine. In their quest to rise above their lot and become the corporate elite, they leave first world inflated salaries to carry jobs to the depressed economies of the world; because, "creating jobs" can never be seen or defined as slavery. But, *sweat shops and slave-like conditions* were and are an abominable reality. *Building safety nets to prevent iPhone workers from committing suicide is not a**

solution. Pay them for their labor!! In America, labor unions were built and child labor laws were written at the graveside of millions. When developing countries are consistently destabilized, they cannot defend their populations with such luxuries as labor laws. So the women in free zones around the world subsidize first world consumption which is the opiate of the privileged masses like me. But then, where are the jobs for the working class in the first world? They are where the slaves are--in the global dung heap (i.e. the sweat shops of the developing world). And the American working class suffers. So in voting for Trump, white men are simply demanding that the corporate monster stop feasting on them.

So, how do we bring jobs back to America? Change. In governance, change is defined as reform or revolution. Trump is the face of reform. He does not want capitalism to end. So, he's willing to work hard to prop up this system. Why? Because no one wants to swallow the bitter pill of revolution. Yes, his rhetoric is divisive and hateful. That's because he is a reflection of the fear that fuels the hearts and minds of white working class Americans. As a card carrying member of the global elite, however, he wants to succeed for the sake of his kind and the longevity of the system which sustains his billion dollar bank account. He knows also that the revolution will come from the people carrying the guns. Look to France, Russia and Cuba for examples. So he appeals to the interests of those with gun-power and gun-powder who've never been slaves and thus aren't accustomed to "turning the other cheek." His success will depend on his capacity to convince them, both houses of Congress as well as the global power elite that a greater good is served through compromise. I could write a book about why he will likely fail miserably in his efforts. But if I can summarize why in one word, that word would be "ego"--his and all of those sitting at the table with him. Any global system that does not have love and service as its core value is doomed to fail. And so will he. I pray that I am wrong but I know I am not. It is for this reason that I left the Presidential box empty for the first time in my life. A vote for Clinton was a vote for globalization. A vote for Trump was a vote for capitalism, nationalism and ethnicism. I was willing to accept whatever outcome materialized because there was no love vote on the ballot. I do not want to protect my interests as an African-American at the expense of Africans, Asians or South Americans. If you are surprised by my voting decision, you are surely new to my posts. For the record, I have and will always say: I am not a capitalist. And Jesus wasn't one either. It is time for a socialist movement in America and in the world. It is a more humane system. Bernie Sanders represented that voice of reason. There are many ways to shape and form such a system; so, let's not assume that any one model should override any other. In America, we could start by having a party which represents socialist values. A true democracy would have these opinions represented. Instead, we have two sides of the same capitalist coin. Let's pray that when the call for change arises again, it will be at the hand of the ballot and not the bullet.

Poetically Speaking: The Power of Faith



This poem is inspired by two beautiful blessings that I have witnessed over the past 18 months. In short, women who voiced concerns and in one instance acceptance of their barrenness have conceived! I was so inspired and ecstatic about the first that I told the second her story as a testimony of faith and hope in December 2015 and then she too had a

testimony within 3 months. I was absolutely incredulous! Yet, I wasn't.

Well, you know me: I'm all about spreading the love. So wanting to continue the flow of God's divine grace, I'm putting their testimonies on blast...praying for a baby boom! ☺ Are your eyes open to the blessings all around you? They're truly EVERYWHERE!!! ☺ God is great and merciful.

Since I count these ladies as beautiful friends, I felt inspired by their joy to pen a record of their blessings for my own remembrance. One baby is now 11 months old while Mom is shy of 50 years (if she hasn't already hit the mark), my sister Meiko's son is almost 5 months old as she embarks on her 40th year of grace. Pray blessings for the mothers and their babies. We give thanks for God's grace and the power of faith. AMEN!!!!

At Your Calling

Your love is a fountain flowing freely, effortlessly to infinity.
If we drink from your fountain, we will never thirst again.
Let us drink with abandon
(...at Your calling.)

Such divine love is abundantly renewing, changing forms and life forms--ever in flight.
Seeking another venue to place a miracle.
Time--a barometer of change and a measure of anointing, ripens
(...at Your calling.)

In the secret place of your creation, love becomes manifest.
Rich, fecund and masterfully programmed,
The seed planted, the code of life replays the dance of a thousand universes
(...at Your calling.)

All the world is witness to divine perfection's awakening.
A baby's breath emerges from a woman's womb, once dormant but now
Elevated to the highest and most sublime use
(...at Your calling.)

I have seen divine miracles in a mother's tired eyes from laboring, for existence.
From the wrinkled, pink fingers of newness worn by an ancient soul.
Divinity has no limitations so the Sarai's of a new age rejoice in their knowing:
"God's favor is there for me too!"

At Your calling

The unyielding Earth shakes mountains into valleys, reshapes peninsulas into islands;
and the ageless tempest roars seas into tributaries to conjoin lakes by way of sacred pathways.

At Your calling

Particles of divine kisses sit abandoned on the desert sands only to blossom into
fragrant wild flowers at the blessing of a long awaited rain.

At Your calling

Words to love songs spring fluently, unabatedly into being, and new hearts beat to
old cadences as they merge into the tapestry of divine laughter.

Love, in all of its multi-facets and forms, in all its hues and textures, is made (w)holy
complete and perfect; ...but only,

At Your calling.

Poetically Speaking: The Depths of a Vapor



On Tuesday, July 10th (2012), I don my walking clothes and go for my much anticipated stroll with nature. Thunderstorms are in the forecast; the sky is overcast. I know it will rain but the thought of an umbrella feels just a little inauthentic. So, I zip up my light exercise jacket and stretch my legs into heaven. The air is pregnant with moisture and the prospects of a downpour. I smile at the perfection of the moment. And then she arrives. Light droplets of rain commit suicide on hot pavement. My mind considers: “There’s still time to go back for your umbrella. See, that lady has hers.” I smile and *walk on by*. I turn into the neighborhood that warms my heart every time I greet it. With six-story high oaks and maples, I trace my familiar path with my head looking up in awe and wonder. What an interesting perspective to walk my usual path while looking up. Things look a lot different: more peaceful, more graceful. So beautiful...or just different. I notice a tree that I would love to climb if there were just a few lower branches upon which to hoist my weight. And next to it, another climber’s dream. My sons would find a way up. As for me, I remain grounded. I smile at the cycle of life, and vaguely notice that the birds are becoming a bit more talkative.

And then she arrives. A quickening. Dutiful droplets with a more frenzied cadence batter the hot pavement sending up the smell of relief. I walk under the trees and give thanks that they are so plentiful. I, for the most part, remain dry. Ahhh, the smell of pine from the fresh, newly moistened needles and cones. I inhale with abandon and close my eyes to indulge the fragrance. Exhale. Has anyone ever made pine-scented perfume? There’s one for Chanel! The squirrels are happily frolicking and hardly paying any attention to me. I prefer it that way. Somehow, I feel connected when they remain in the zone, as am I. I walk on and listen. What is that sound? It’s *the sound of silence*...though the rain symphony drones all around me.

And then she arrives. Bands of celestial tidal waves drench the earthline as sheets of inspiration. Like a painter splattering power and ingenuity on canvas, I bow my head to creation’s majesty and I *float on*. The trees are no longer a source of refuge so I succumb to the inevitable truth of my existence. I walk openly in the torrential downpour...for a time, not even remotely deterred from my usual path. And then as

if to say, “Just testing you,” Mother Nature subsides for a spell and settles into a steady drum roll that is gentle, relaxed and ready for the long haul. I too settle into her rhythm, a little relieved that she has granted temporary mercies. I hear no thunder and see no flashes of lightning. Good to go. There’s only Nature’s tears of joy, and all of the foliage of University Drive expresses their appreciation like giant fern trees in a rain forest. Just yesterday, those little purple-hued plants creeping along the edge of the sidewalk were contemplating the thought of their demise. Today, they are radiant in their full plumage. I too am thankful. I marvel at the beauty and balance of nature. In this perfect moment, Nature and I are lovers reunited after a long separation. I am pleased that she is so welcoming of this prodigal child. She is enamored with the warmth of my breath.

As I continue on in the silence and majesty of the moment, I notice drops of rain dew accumulating at the tips of my twisted tresses and then leaping into space with the rhythm of my stride. Water has dripped down my face and into my mouth and I’m aware of the flavor of sweetness on my lips. What in the world does Oraje put in his Banana Cream Leave-in Conditioner anyway?! The smell conjures memories of Southern baked banana pudding; it looks about the same. Who knew it would taste as wonderful! I smile. The birds are silent now. All is still and quiet, except for the sounds of my rubber soles on pavement. The front of my pants is drenched, while the sides and backs of my legs are almost dry. *Imagine*. After all that rain, how could I still feel comfortable within my soaked clothes? Mystery solved: they aren’t soaked. (Things that make you go hmm.)

Humidity lingers along the earthline. The air is as full of intensity as *midnight at the oasis*. Yet, I feel relieved to have this jacket. Then, I’m conscious of a peculiar smell. I search my database to find a close match only to discover that it is most omnipresent. It is the smell of nothingness. No smell in particular stands out and lingers on the wind. I search evermore to discern whether my mind is deceived. How can nothingness have a smell? And then, it comes to me. I smell the fragrance of everything blended into oneness. It is the smell of everything and nothing at the same time. I reflect on this new discovery and suddenly smile to myself. Now, the mystery of black and white seems to make perfect sense. Black and white is the same phenomenon. Yet, humankind in a flash of “brilliance” looks at this divine simplicity, labels it as hues on polar opposite sides of the color spectrum and calls the hypothesis enlightenment. I snicker with empathy for the human condition. It is my condition. It is somewhat comical indeed.

As I awaken to full ignorance of myself as separate from Nature, I notice that my clothes are drying. It could only be the heat that’s drying them, as the rain has not totally subsided and the sun remains aloof. I contemplate the possibilities of actually returning to the office dry. A smile shadows the corners of my lips and Mother Nature says “check mate.” A final torrential downpour alights seemingly from out of nowhere. Had I not been unplugged at that critical moment, I would have better noticed her mood. I smile at the folly of Man and mind and trek along in the beauty of showering bounty. As I turn the final corner leading to my office, the sun peeps from behind a cloud and seems to be cajoling, “*Hello, it’s me.*” The entire duration of my journey was blessed by Lady Rain. Now, Ra seems to be saying, “If I had come out sooner, you would not have forgotten yourself and therefore would not have enjoyed yourself quite as deliciously.” I acknowledge this truth and contemplate this parable: Since the human body is 79% water, does that explain why I feel dry though I’m soaking wet. Am I wet or dry? I conclude that the square root of wet multiplied by the inverse of the square root of dry equals one peace and contentment. And that, I AM. I give thanks. God is good!