

AU NATUREL

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THE NEXT GENERATION...

Some of you may have seen this video link already because it went viral fairly quickly. But if you haven't, [check it out](#). My favorite comment about the video was from someone who posted: "My cat watched this video. Now he's a lion." © For an added treat, [check out why this young man's got game f real!!](#)

After watching this and reflecting on the fact that [this talented artist](#) at 22 years is the same age as my eldest son (pictured below), I feel truly inspired by what the next generation will do/be. This son phoned the other day to announce that his bridge design project placed 5th at Hampton U and is going to a statewide architecture competition in VA. He's found his calling. Below is a pic of him with his friend Chelise. I honestly like this girl, and it's not because she's a naturalista, drop dead gorgeous and in the Presidential Society (4.0 GPA). I like her because she loves my son, and he loves her too. He hasn't said so, but that shy look on his face speaks volumes to the woman who raised him. I give thanks and pray for blessings on all youth of the next generation. They'll be the caregivers of our generation when we're old so I pray not solely for unselfish reasons. ☺



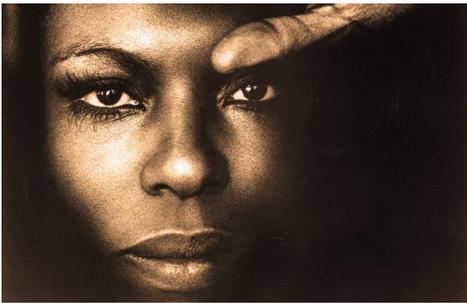
SALON AND PERSONAL UPDATES

Well, the crisp winds of autumn are in full swing. It's time to turn on the heat and prepare for the shorter days. I've already started to rise later than usual as the sun seems to greet me far later in the morning. But, Daylight Savings Time will end soon; so hopefully, I'll be able to re-adjust my internal clock.

Within the salon, we carry on with joy and gladness in our hearts. Busy-ness is a little slower than usual for this time of the year but we give thanks. I've heard salon aficionados in other states saying the same thing. It makes me wonder what's really going on. Business management has stretched me out of my comfort zone to consider economics much more than I ever have in the past. I understand money: I was born understanding money. But, economics is another kettle of fish altogether. As a result, I understand Republicans better than ever. But in my heart, I am not a capitalist. It makes for a formidable paradox that challenges me daily to stay true to myself. The net effect is that I'm forced to look at things from a very macro perspective when digesting problems, defining their origins and strategizing solutions.

CONSIDER THIS...

I've thought long and hard about this, and I think the only industries really making sizable profits in America right now are telecommunications and health care. I'm not thinking of individual corporate performance now. I'm thinking of industry-wide performance. I could be wrong... I think many would agree with the health care argument; but when I think that people stood in line for hours to pay [\\$600 for a new iPhone](#) as soon as it came out, I'm inclined to include the telecom industry as well. I ask: What regular service(s) did these people opt out of the month the iPhone came out in order to pay for it? Surely not everyone is that strapped for cash, but the truth is that the average American IS. In fact, we pay about \$300 a month (for a family of four) more for telephone and cable services than we did 20 years ago. Has anyone bothered to ask what is the snowball effect of this massive redirecting of monthly household expenditures at the national level? Could this have something to do with why so many corporate giants need a bailout and why small businesses are going belly-up? Back in late 2012, I paid cash advances to three different small businesses over a six-month period to the tune of about \$6,000. By the end of the six months, all three businesses had gone bankrupt



[A poetic interlude for an early morning rendezvous....](#)

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and I was left holding the bag: One was a local publisher, one was a national furniture store and the other was a personal service business that had been in business in the Raleigh community for over 10 years. At that moment, I knew the recession was not over though most business sources were stating the contrary. So now, I watch the economy around me more closely. There are many vacant office buildings in Raleigh which suggests to me that personal services are on the decline. In fact, our salon's next door neighbor just packed up after years of operation as an engineering contractor. Two new businesses are now taking up the space but the test will be in survivability. So, I give thanks for another blessed year of operation. Indeed, life is good. And with that, I rest soulfully in a melodic [afternoon dream](#).

“Without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed—and no republic can survive. That is why the Athenian lawmaker Solon decreed it a crime for any citizen to shrink from controversy. And that is why our press was protected by the First Amendment—the only business in America specifically protected by the Constitution.”— John F. Kennedy (April 27, 1961)

MY PRE-ELECTION RANT

Okay, y'all. I don't want to purport to tell anyone who they should vote for or how they should vote, but I personally am disappointed with politics of late. The onslaught of campaign ads that are dominating the airwaves is enough to make anyone want to call "Earl" and I don't mean my brother. It's like watching school children in the playground argue over whose turn it is to sit on the swing. "You already got a turn: it's my turn!" "Yeah, well, I can swing higher and faster than you so I should get to stay on longer." "Yeah, well, I like to swing more than you do. Besides, you play with the new kid and he's a loser so you shouldn't get a turn just for that." "Yeah, well you eat boogers!" Ooops. I mean, "really people?" The campaign between Kay Hagan and Thom Tillis is much like this scenario—i.e. childish, petty and personal. I watched their debate a few weeks back and felt embarrassed to have either of them represent our state. According to Tillis, Hagan can't think for herself and is compromised because her husband received Stimulus Package money which was a direct conflict of interest, considering that she voted to support it. According to Hagan and her supporters, Tillis is 'bought and paid for by fat cats' and is attempting to take women back to the dark ages through his views on equal pay, contraception and abortion rights. The plot thickens. It goes on and on and on.

Through all the muck and mire, I found myself asking the questions that no one seems to be talking about: **Firstly, what does it say when we as a nation have reached the point that candidates for electoral office can not be heard in a "public" debate unless they've met the financial (i.e. privately funded) requirement for inclusion?** The Libertarian candidate, Sean Haugh, was only included in the third and final debate. And even then, [he was mostly ignored by Hagan and Tillis though seated just between them](#). Is it any surprise that electoral candidates can be 'bought and paid for' and/or inclined to take favors that go along with the prestige of office? Check out: [Capitalism a Love Story](#) for more obvious conflicts of interest realized by currently seated members of Congress and political appointees. When do we demand greater accountability?

Secondly, who gives a flying flip about immigration reform?! TRULY!! I heard both of these candidates (Hagan and Tillis) on the news this morning (October 27th) outlining their respective plans for reform. I started cursing. Shamefully, I DID! I said to my husband: "Capitalism **REQUIRES** an under-class!!!!!!!!!!!!!! These people are talking

out of two sides of their necks.” As a business owner, I KNOW what I’m talking about. Some of my stiffest competition is African braiding salons. I love these sisters. They’re doing their thing. But, some of them are known to employ people who aren’t always “legal” and pay them sub-standard wages. That is not a sweeping generalization of all braiding salons, but it is a reality. I once contracted a sister who was working simultaneously in surrounding braiding salons. At *Schatzi’s*, she was paid like every licensed stylist in our salon: 50%! But after getting burned by some of the other salons, she started to treat me like I was trying to cheat her. It frankly pissed me off!!! As they say in Jamaica, “DON’T FRY ME WITH SOMEONE ELSE’S FAT!” The truth of the matter is this: No stylist in my salon can EVER say I cheated them out of anything that they earned. I make that statement as an unequivocal fact!! Yet in those salons where this practice occurs, these under-paid sisters help to suppress the cost of services and labor compensation. Here’s how it works: At some braiding salons, you get a price quote of \$160 for an extension hair service. At *Schatzi’s*, the same service is \$180. People often say: How long will it take? I say: “Five-six hours depending on the style.” I may hear, “Um, that’s okay. The other salon can do it in three hours.” I get it. Time is money. But, how do they do it? Well, they may have three or even four people working on one person’s head. That sounds ideal. But from the side of compensation, the salon takes 50% for over-head and the remaining 50% is for the stylist. So at *Schatzi’s*, that means the stylist gets \$90 which averages to about \$15 to \$18 per hour. At the braiding salon, that means more than one person share \$80. Let’s assume that only two people work on the client for \$160 and take three hours to complete the service. That rounds out to \$13 per hour. If more than two people worked on the style, the compensation is less. Because the hours of the day and the numbers of clients entering the salon is finite, we cannot assume an ever-expanding base of compensation to fill all of the stylists’ hours in the salon. And let’s not mention the whole issue of accountability as it relates to tracking which stylists worked on which services and for how long. You can quickly see how things can go awry fairly quickly. And so, my sister contractor put her dukes up all ready to do battle with me when she was the sole stylist and the sole payee for the service. The rate is fixed; there’s nothing to argue. This is not rocket-science. But, it’s life.

Honestly, I ain’t mad at these other salons. We play with the hand we’re dealt. I appreciate the perspective of the business owner, the employee AND the consumer. Ultimately, people do what they must to survive. But the end result is that business requires a thick skin and lots of prayer to keep your heart and integrity intact. My first martial arts master was celebrated as one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the game. But, I know that he “employed” Korean interns who he didn’t have to pay because they were here on student visas and therefore were much like a free labor force. When one of them got injured in the course of her duties as an instructor, she had little recourse because she was not actually an employee. How is a martial arts school that’s actually paying their employees to compete on an uneven playing field? I recall one of the school instructors telling me that the Korean Grandmaster—a man of small stature who eats only raw vegetables and lives quietly in the mountains where he trains his students, came to visit a few years back. He speaks only Korean. As he spoke to the school instructors prior to his departure, the school owner (Master) had to translate. The Grandmaster then explained how the school owner/Master was not the man that he had taught so many years ago. In his words, ‘he had changed.’ As a result, he was never to invite him back here because he would not come. Imagine having to translate such damning words about yourself. The Master still had the humility and respect for his teacher to faithfully translate his words though it was clearly not in his best interest to do so. Sometimes we forget who we are. But sometimes, we never knew.

This is the reality of small businesses in this country. I am particularly sensitive about this issue because I took my perfectly functional Volvo to the Raleigh dealership on October 1st for my 90,000 servicing. I was told of needed repairs which I scheduled pending the arrival of parts. I didn’t even get 35 miles before my car suddenly had a major catastrophe and now “needs a new engine.” The stated repairs had NOTHING to do with the engine. The dealership then slaps me with an estimate of \$10,900 to get the car operational again. REALLY!! How come I didn’t have engine trouble when I brought it to you a few days ago? How come this just happened a little over a month AFTER my extended warranty expired? I don’t want to believe someone did some thing to my car. But, EVERY VOLVO SPECIALIST I’VE SPOKEN TO SINCE THAT DAY (about 4 different ones), has suggested just that. In fact, the man working on my car right now has insisted: “In the interim while we’re working on your car, I want you to call the GM at that dealership and tell him you’re taking him to small claims court ‘cause I don’t even remotely doubt that they did something to your car. Somebody made a mistake.” And with that, the desperation of profits and the lure to be competitive creates sad realities that make the skin crawl to consider. Thank God people of integrity can be found in all nooks and crannies of society.

This reality is also the reason why large corporations out-source labor and move their factories to China, Mexico and Jamaica. While living in Jamaica, I watched women working in the Jamaican free-zone protest their suppressed wages of US\$20 a week. These ladies made Hanes garments and Tommy Hilfiger shirts but could never afford to buy any of the goods they produce. They could barely afford to buy their kid's school uniforms and supplies. These women are routinely searched when leaving the sweat shops. In 1998 when they gave a voice to their concerns, they were all fired. There's a perpetual under-class in Jamaica, so a trouble-maker is easily replaced. We don't fully appreciate the social costs of our electronic gadgets, our Coach bags and our cheap knock-off goods. But honestly, the average American simply DOES NOT CARE!! So in my mind, why should politicians feed me a line about immigration reform when people frankly don't give a flip!! It's only when we see the Asian immigrant who out-competed us for the job that we wanted that we care. We don't care when we're getting good deals at Wal-Mart. I think it's sad, and I'm really tired of the hypocrisy—yes, the misspelling is intentional. Our country allows and embraces illegal immigrants. It's just not politically expedient to say so; much like sleeping with black slave woman back in the day and pretending that those light-skinned children just magically appeared from the pale-skinned fairy. Crazy!

Thirdly and lastly, I ask: where's the money? During the Bush administration, the US Treasury handed over about \$700 billion in the [Wall Street Bailout 2008](#) and not even four months later, the Obama administration signed into being [another economic stimulus package](#) that bailed out the auto industry among other things. How exactly is this money being paid back?! Why is no one asking these questions? We're talking about over \$1 trillion dollars of aid and assistance to businesses that repo your car if you don't pay on time and foreclose on your house if you're down on your luck. Does this make sense? Why are we debating whether political candidates support gun control or not? The truth is: whether or not gun control is supported, our sons are being shot on the streets. PERIOD! But maybe if they had jobs to go to and more opportunities, they wouldn't be on the streets so much. Maybe if the money that's bailing out Wall Street and the auto industry were actually re-building [the nation's ever-crumbling infrastructure](#) that we inherited from the truly visionary leaders of our past, MAYBE, our economy would be stimulated. Maybe if we were training masons and carpenters and construction workers rather than bailing out "fat cats" who dine for lunch off of the equivalent of what commoners eat for the week, we wouldn't have to import so many skilled and semi-skilled laborers from other places. But then if we did that, we'd have to pay them a decent wage. And so the cycle continues. The truth is, our nation was great! I don't know what it is today. Many say it's the best country in the world. I wonder what criteria we use to measure "best." If it's wealth, most of us honestly don't have it. And with these recent bailouts, the US Treasury doesn't either. I fear that the concerns about "spending our social security" are moot. I believe that money's gone. If we measure "best" by democracy, I would argue that democracy has been systematically eroded when Political Action Committees alone determine whose voice is heard. If "best" is defined by "freedom".....well, ask a Vet about that one. I would wager that those no longer serving would have a real story to tell you about that. And if it's our constitution, well [FDR himself said we should not sit on our laurels as our Constitution is not perfect](#). Yet, corporate interests will use the letter of the Constitution to rob the citizenry of the *right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. These foundational principles were established BEFORE the Constitution. We should never let the letter of the law blind us to the intent of the law. It reminds me of [1 Corinthians 13.1](#).

But alas, I'm but one voice whose tired of madness. More and more, I feel that silence is complicity so, the tone of this publication may shift at times. Yet, more sisters are acknowledging their appreciation for it. So, we give thanks.

ALL SHALL BE WELL: BY FATHER RICHARD ROHR

Father Richard Rohr is expounding on "faith" this week. He starts by outlining how he left seminary in 1970 believing he was now empowered to have all the answers, or at least to find them. It's taken him many years, sometimes in dark places, to cultivate a "freedom in not knowing." In one devotional he writes:

Faith, as we see in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus' usage of the same, is much closer to our words "trust" or "confidence" than it is about *believing doctrines to be true* (which demands almost no ego surrender or real change of the small self). We have wasted too many centuries now defending such an intellectual notion of Biblical faith. Real faith people are, quite simply, usable for larger purposes because they live in and listen to a much Larger Self (ie. the Spirit in you.).

Well on October 27th, I found this gem: All Shall Be Well. I hope it edifies you in some way....

“All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” It is amazing that Julian of Norwich could say such a thing after her visions of the crucified Christ. A God who could take the worst thing in the world (“the killing of the God-Man”) and turn it into the best thing (the redemption of the world) is surely a God we can trust to “work all things together for good” (Romans 8:28). Only after a person has once seen the worst turn into the best does their understanding of spiritual reality begin.

Paul speaks of “the folly of the cross” in several places. He seems to see that *the mystery of the cross allowed people to incorporate the tragic (the irrational, absurd, and sinful) and even use it for very good purposes*. In his thinking, only the Christ perspective can absorb and appreciate paradox—which is order within disorder, redemption through tragedy, resurrection through death, divinity through humanity. For Paul, therefore, *the cross and its transformative power* is his summary symbol for the depths of divine wisdom, which seems like mere “folly” to the “masters of every age” (1 Corinthians 2:6). The compassionate holding of essential meaninglessness or tragedy, as Jesus does in hanging on the cross, is the final and triumphant resolution of all the dualisms and dichotomies that we ourselves must face in our own lives. We are thus “saved by the cross”!

Conversion is not joining a different group, but seeing with the eyes of the crucified. The cross is Paul’s philosopher’s stone or “code breaker” for any lasting spiritual liberation. God can save sincere people of faith inside any system or religion, if only they can be patient, God-trusting, and compassionate in the presence of misery, failure, or imperfection—especially their own. This is life’s essential journey. These trustful ones have surrendered to the Eternal Christ Mystery, very often without needing to use the exact word “Christ” at all (Matthew 7:21). It is the doing not the saying that matters (Matthew 21:28-32).

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