

# AU NATUREL

## NATURAL NEWS School and Salon Updates

Well, there's much happening since my last missive. The biggest news is that my [Wake Tech natural hair care students graduated on September 21<sup>st</sup>](#). It was a beautiful ceremony. I was so happy to issue them all awards for their hard work and dedication. They surprised me a few days prior with a party, a bouquet of flowers and a beautiful charm bracelet. When I saw the charms they selected for the bracelet, I thought, "These ladies really know me!!" The first charms that I'm adding are each students' initials. I want to remember the details 20 years from now! ☺ Thank you ladies! You were a joy and pleasure to serve!! Glad we're keeping in touch.



The photo was taken immediately after graduation. Go

figure why my eyes always seem closed in these group shots. I WAS definitely tired on some class days during the 4 months but DANG!!! But in truth when I smile, my eyes tend to squint. It's a family trait on my Mom's side. I got it honest. Although, I think they were really closed in this pic!! :-o

Anyway, the next class with Shaundrelle Todd leading instruction is scheduled to begin on Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>. For more info on future classes, look [here](#). For myself, I've quickly readjusted to going home in the evenings. It's amazing how much you can do with the hours after the regular workday. The rest I'm getting is much needed.

Within the salon, life is beautiful. As always, we give thanks.

## POETICALLY SPEAKING: NOSTALGIA

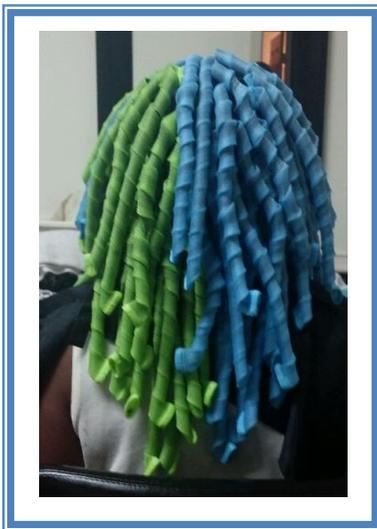
One thing, I've learned in life: You're never too old to learn something and you NEVER truly know your history. One of my favorite Facebook friends, my former high school band director Mr. Al Morris, shares classic music videos all the time to remind us of the power and potential of self-mastery. Back in the day, I was a flautist in the Symphonic Band- 1<sup>st</sup> chair for a brief stint until Rod DeBrew put me under manners. ☺ (He played in the Jazz AND Symphonic Bands.) Though I would have LOVED to play in the Jazz band; I felt I needed the hard science College Prep courses so I opted out. But, I loved the music and the ability of the Jazz artists to improvise!! In Symphonic band, we always followed the script while Jazz musicians went wherever they wanted to go, within a defined syncopation and measure of time of course. But, I digress... Often times, Mr. Morris takes us on a spiritual journey to a place of peace and wonderment and awe. He is a blessed man who is still teaching though retired. ☺ A true lover of Jazz music, he taught many young African-American men to let their inner soulbird's free as they ad libbed their way into the annals of music history at Phoebus High School. He is one of the best band directors that ever lived!! The number of Facebook friends that he has at 70 years of age is a testimony to the power of his influence on many of our lives...even today! Mr. Morris recently posted [this gem](#) that had me intensively researching [the depth of this sister's talent](#) as well as that of [her famous husband](#). Enjoy this poetic interlude!! To Mr. Morris: I'll salute you ALWAYS! You are a blessed soul. Thank you for teaching so many so well!!

# CURLFORMERS

## The Good, the Bad and the Alluring

**The Good:** I haven't done any serious reviews of hairstyles in a while because I tend to stick to the tried and true—two-strand twists. But for the NUSOL Natural Hair Expo in August, I decided to make a change. I'd heard a lot about Curlformers, so I decided to purchase them and see if they stood up to the hype. They are long spiral rods made of mesh plastic which has plenty of holes to facilitate rapid drying. In a nutshell, they are designed to curl your hair famously with NO HEAT applied whatsoever. I was pretty down with that. Flexi-rods do the same thing but, this curl is supposed to be more defined. So, I thought I'd investigate.

**The Bad:** I bought two packs of 40 Curlformers at about \$60 each. That's not a small investment. I could have worked with one pack of 40 but it would have meant that my hair sections would be bigger. Since I wanted to be sure my hair would dry, I opted for more. However, I was regretting that decision when it was time to install them. I had a friend help me and I can say that if she hadn't been there, I might I have canned the whole affair. They are not as simple to install as the [orientation video](#) makes out. You really need to pull them straight out, like at a 90 degree angle to your scalp. As the rods are long and my arms are only SO long, my angle was always slanted downwards. The net effect was that I often had to re-start the process which made for a lot of duplicated effort. With both of us working on wet hair, it took a little over 2 hours to put them in. That's significant in my mind.



You wear the rods until your hair dries, which is unique for every individual depending on your hair thickness, the amount of hair in the curls, whether your hair was saturated, etc. I planned on sleeping in mine. The only problem was that I was famished after installation, and I don't do fast food ordinarily. So, YES!!! I went to my favorite restaurant ([Shaba Shabu](#)) looking like the Predator Chic! It was pretty comical. The African maître d' smiled when I entered the restaurant and as if in on the joke, whispered discretely to me, "Nice hairdo!" I laughed because he appreciated the comedy of it all. Of course, our waitress didn't get the memo; so, she avoided making eye contact with me the whole time though lunch was my treat. I didn't blame her though. I honestly think she didn't want to stare and didn't know what to say. As a general rule, many White women aren't comfortable commenting on Black women's hair so she played it safe. I wouldn't have minded the laughs though. I honestly debated whether we should go to this

spot. But, it was 4pm. **I thought:** If I'm a business that's open and ready to serve clients and it's the 4 o'clock hour (the slow period of the day), would I rather maintain the image of the establishment, or have a paying customer. With that logic in mind, we went in and dined. I still can't believe I did that but, have you ever had their seaweed salad and Sushi??? If you have, you feel me. I only saw two other parties of guests; so, I figured I made the right choice. After that, I had only to go to Wake Tech to teach my evening class. But, I had already alerted everyone to expect the unexpected. Besides, I'm among family there. So, the main point here is that you need to be at home when you put them in. I wasn't. In fact, it was a rather busy day for me. So if you choose to try them, hunker down for the day.

In all, I kept the rods in for 12 hours to be sure my hair was dry. My husband looked at me like I had stepped off of Mars when I came home. I tried sleeping on them but that didn't go well AT ALL! I got some kind of sleep but not restful. At minutes after 2am when I stirred feeling as if I had had NO SLEEP whatsoever. Lloyd then half-sleepily says, "Schatzi, you don't have to do all of that to be pretty. You're pretty already." I thought: How sweet! And with that, I got up to take the rods out.

**The Alluring:** Luckily, my hair was dry when I removed the Curlformers. Also, it took only about 30 minutes to take them out which was a significant improvement over the installation time. After removal, it was about 3am So, I put my hair up in a [Woolylocks](#) hair cover made by brother Glen, gathered my hair towards the crown of my head so as not to crush the curls and went back to sleep. The photo to the left was the result. I was rather pleased. The curls were beautifully defined down to my scalp!! The curls were bouncy, shiny and elastic. My hair looked really healthy and beautiful. Note: I didn't comb or separate the curls AT ALL!! The result would have been much different if I had.

Overall, it looked like I had a press and curl with NO HEAT APPLICATION WHATSOEVER!! AWESOME!! Compliments at the hair expo were NON-STOP!! I should have been paid to do a commercial for the company because I had to explain the product and the process quite often throughout the day. Someone went so far as to ask if we would offer this service in the salon. Well...the Curlformers are very personalized. Even when you clean them, strands of your hair can be left inside the rods and may be difficult to remove. So, you don't really want to share your Curlformers. I wouldn't advise re-use within a salon setting. But if you have purchased them and would like help with installation, we'd be happy to oblige. The curls are rather divine.



**The Unexpected:** Now a few years back, I did a write up about a flexi-rod set that I did which lasted me about 3 weeks. So naturally, I expected the Curlformers set to last about as long. Guess again, CHIC!! Firstly as humidity took hold of the curls, they puffed up and became fuller!! NICE!! By day 4, I was on cloud 9. By day 10, my beautiful curls were turning into beautiful locks. They had lost their bounce and elasticity and were starting to bond. In fact when I saw a beautiful Jamaican sister that I hadn't seen since our children were rather young, she complimented me on my locks. I'm totally NOT interested in locking my hair; so, it was time to wash these curls out of my hair. I believe they began the locking process because the spiral rods that I used have the narrowest band width. Anyone who knows natural hair knows that a corkscrew curl or coil is the foundation of starting locks. So, my hair was doing what it is programmed to do. I would have needed to use large rods with larger curls to avoid this occurrence. Afterwards, I couldn't figure why I didn't guess that this is what would have happened. But, I honestly didn't think that far. My hair is VERY KINKY!! So, it has always been prone to lock up easily. I figure when I'm in my sixties, hopefully wearing a full head of silver hair, I will just bite the bullet and lock completely. By then, I'll be trying to hold onto every strand of hair I can in order for my hair to remain full and healthy. So, I believe locking is in my future. But to the beautiful, half-locked Day 10 look I say, [I will see you again. But not yet, not yet.](#) (Okay, I recently watched that movie with my nieces! ☺)

If you're down for a press set look minus the heat, this style is a keeper. I pleasant surprise was the extent to which my hair was prepped and curled down to my scalp. Only a hot comb or a flat iron gets that close. I have never been able to replicate that level of tension at the scalp with flexi-rods so invariably, my hair is puffy at the roots when I use them. But, the advantage of the flexi-rods is a longer set IF YOU'RE USING THE narrow Curlformers. You may want to try the yellow and pink rods combo to avoid what I experienced. I think you'll be pleased for a change of pace. But if I'm honest, I'm a simple girl. I prefer EASY...ALL THE TIME!! So, I'd rather do a two-strand twist

out and call it a day. The added cost is about \$0; though there's not a significant savings of time. But, you are surely able to sleep more restfully on a two-strand.

Well, I hope this review proves beneficial to those considering. There are tons of Youtube videos out there with people's personal reviews but NONE of them told me about what I experienced. So, I thought I'd chime in for a more comprehensive review. Happy Styling!! ☺

## SUBTLE IRONIES: What is the Value of Love?

**Disclaimer:** *This article may make some people uncomfortable. First, let me say that I've revised context and players for the sake of...confidentiality. But, the core message is unadulterated truth. The tone of this article is a reflection of a discomfort that I recently felt regarding a hair care service that I witnessed. I am not sharing this story to spread the dis-ease. Rather, I believe that shedding a light on a germ that grows in darkness will in fact kill it. And I am all about killing this particular germ. In fact, the circumstance has given me serious pause to reflect upon my own actions, beliefs and motivations.*



*The intended purpose of this sharing is introspective; and if a seed is planted, prayerfully growth and balance will be restored. Naturally, the context is not universal, meaning "if the shoe don't fit, don't wear it." And so I begin...*

Recently, I had the pleasure of assisting a beautiful young lady with the styling of her long, thick, natural hair. She was brought to the shop by her Mom. She had an exceptional quantity and length of hair with a very kinky texture. Hands-down, it is beautiful!! Ordinarily, a service such as this one would go off without a hitch. But, Mom came into the salon with a clear attitude as she believed she had been misquoted about the price of the hair care service. She wanted small, individual braids for her daughter's natural hair and was "told" it was \$25. Sorry. For the length and volume of hair, that service is about \$80, even for a child. My first thought was that

## THE WONDERS OF HUMANITY

As a continuation of the Good, the Bad and the Alluring vibration, I thought I'd share a few videos that I've shared with my sons lately. They're truly a testimony to the wonders of humanity. Can I confess: I didn't share one of these videos. I saw the link on my FB page and started to share it with my eldest, but he's such a daredevil, I didn't want to give him any ideas. But, I went to his page and the video was already posted from the week before. I have no doubt that [this place is on his personal bucket list](#). I recently had him promise me to take Everest off. He said: "Okay Mom. But, I'm GOING to skydive!" We agreed. No worries. His grand-dad was a Paratrooper so I'm down with that option. But, the bridge is something that I know I'll never see or cross. How do I know? Because when we went to the [Needle in Toronto](#) and walked across the glass bottom floor, I thought I'd have a fit. He was about 8 then. He simply slide across the floor and laughed at my refusal to look down. I birthed a daredevil and a politician. As I prepared this write-up, my youngest son was assisting a young Black Durham politician (28 years old) with his election campaign by manning the polls. I'm delighted that he's socially conscious. [With political realities like this to face](#), we need all the help we can muster. But, I didn't ask him if he'd be skipping class to help out. Not my business. Only I pray that in their respective careers, my sons will value service as man's highest calling, and [build their own bridges to eternity](#).

Mom must have been quoted that price at another salon and confused us with them. Based on how we operate internally, I KNEW she was mistaken as the price was too ridiculous to consider. Yet, she was adamant that she was NOT mistaken. I asked how long it usually takes to do this style on her daughter's hair and Mom said 2-4 hours. I knew 2 hours was totally unrealistic. Four+ hours was about right, though still rather modest based on the amount of hair the daughter has and the service requested. Since Mom was agitated, the daughter was nervous, and negative energy was spilling out into the salon, we conceded, primarily because the appointment was on the books and the stylist's time was blocked out. She would not have another client as we don't double-book. All I can say was that I don't think Mom expected to be accommodated quite so easily and without a fuss because she continued to wear a negative tone and attitude for quite a while afterwards, though the stylist working on her daughter's hair was cheerful and engaging. Eventually, she caught up to the present moment. I marveled at the stylists' ease and composure because she was working with hair that had not been properly detangled prior to the service. Yet, she was patient, respectful and gentle. The little girl did not cringe even once to my knowledge throughout the detangling and styling process of this voluminous mane of hair. In all, it took between 5-6 man hours to complete the daughter's hair. The service was practically free.

Mom thanked us and quickly apologized for being unable to offer a tip. It's surely not a necessity or a requirement so, that was no problem. But my surprise came when Mom signed her name. At the end of her signature, she wrote in two advanced, professional degrees. She had told us where she is gainfully employed during the numerous hours of conversation while working on her daughter's hair, so I knew she had a great job. But in truth, does ANYONE sign their degrees as part of their signature ordinarily? Maybe they do, what do I know? It just felt WEIRD!! The obvious message felt like she wanted us to know, "I'm an educated and important person. Know that!" Yes, respect is due. In fact, we respect all of our clients, regardless of status or condition. But, I can honestly say that to see the professional "caliber" of this woman was a let-down and disappointment for me personally, particularly as she had never graced the inside of the establishment prior to that day. In short, I realized that she believed herself to be more important than the people doing her daughter's hair. At first, I felt sad at her ignorance. Then, I was annoyed. Does that seem like a stretch or an overly strong statement? When you do the math, it isn't really. You see, the daughter's hair took 5-6 man-hours to style and she paid only \$25 for it. That translates to less than \$5/hr. She had the nerve in fact, to tell me that a prominent neighboring natural stylist used to do her daughter's hair; but, Mom left when the stylist started to "arbitrarily" raise prices. All I could think was if *my girl* raised the price on you, it needed to be raised. In fact, I thought: If the child's hair grew to this length and depth of vitality under *my girl's* tutelage; well, she should be praised. But, I said nothing.

The service bothered me for the remainder of the night. Upon further reflection, I concluded that this woman should just relax her daughter's hair and be done with it. I told my students about this case and the recommendation that Mom should relax her daughter's hair. They all grew completely silent after I made this pronouncement as they were shocked to hear these words come from me. I'm an avid proponent of natural hair! So why do I say this? Because ultimately, Mom does not love the texture that she is seemingly trying to preserve. In truth, she despises it. That



sounds like a harsh word. But, we nurture and lavish upon the things we love. We begrudge the things we find to be annoying or resentful. Strangely, Mom confessed to me that her daughter has a very Eurocentric view of her hair. She announced, “I just don’t know where she got that thinking from.” I followed, “Surely, not from home.” She responded, “Exactly!”... (Things that make you go hmmm.)

In truth, we spend money for and on the things we care about, even when it’s inconvenient: child’s education, food, shelter, entertainment. I believe Mom would likely spend double that amount of money on an hour long steak dinner with a significant other and think nothing of it. If we value our children’s hair, why not pay for the care of it. I say this because we have always under-valued Black hair. That’s a fact!

Okay...if times are hard, why not do your own child’s hair? Isn’t that what people do when they’re trying to save money? Mom was able bodied and capable and quite willing to stand an arm’s length from the stylist the entire time she was styling the child’s hair to ensure it was done correctly. She never sat down once....??? I ask: Why not style your own child’s hair? I don’t think any of the brothers featured in the pictures above would dare bring their daughters’ into a salon to ask for such a heavy subsidy. They are all quite willing to do the needful on their own. If they ask for a favor, it’s from a friend...not a business. Okay...assume Mom has NO skills in hair care: Why not ask for cornrows which take a fraction of the time that was employed to style the daughter’s hair and would have been a more appropriate service for the price offered? With these thoughts in mind, I’m compelled to ask: Does Mom really “love” her daughter’s hair when she doesn’t want to pay for it, even though the style requested will last 4-6 weeks? Does she love this hair when she is not eager to style it herself though clearly in want or need of subsidy? Or is the desire to “get over” so strong, that we will exploit even the people whose eyes into which we can look? Do we love the soul staring back at us? Do we love ourselves? Or are we blind consumers enamored with a saved pound sterling which quickly transforms into an extracted pound of flesh from the hide of our own neighbors. **THOUGH A BUSINESS OWNER, I AM NOT A CAPITALIST BECAUSE I HATE EXPLOITATION!!!!** How can we love our neighbors when we don’t love ourselves?? That is why “Embrace the beauty of you” is foundational.

When I reflected on how Mom witnessed the full breadth of man hours that went into the completion of the job and felt that time was not worthy of compensation, I felt...angry!! Yes, that’s what I felt. I thought, “How dare you **NOT** want to do your own daughter’s hair and then want a stranger to care for it at less than minimum wage compensation!! Collectively, we under-value Black things and Black people? Do Black people fully imbibe the slogan “Black lives matter”? **Food for thought:** If they were competent to do the job, would Mom argue with White women at Paul Mitchell’s styling academy about why she should only pay them \$25 to style her daughter’s hair? Or would she be so honored that White women are doing her natural hair that she would accept the price they quoted?... **GET YOUR RELAXER AND DONE!** That is my message to those who don’t want to compensate the people who care for natural hair. The relaxer was designed to make home maintenance easy and inexpensive. Embrace the modern era: You have options. Exercise them. There’s no judgment. You are free. To get the relaxer out of the head, you must first extract it from the heart. If you’re still wearing it in your heart, why not proceed with the logical foregone conclusion? It’s really not that deep. No one CARES if you do. But, please don’t expect me or my kind (i.e. working class women) to subsidize the inner loathing that you mask as awareness and enlightenment for the sake of fad, fashion or convenience. To my eyes, you look like a fool! And yes, I too have been a fool. But the difference is, I know it and am doing something about it. Why do I know I’ve been a fool? Because, I had to feel it at the cellular level. Hopefully, you won’t need to experience the depth of this knowing in order to make a change.

**So, the take home message is this:** Let's learn to see the things produced by people that look like us as inherently valuable and worthy of investment as those produced by others. It seems like I'm making a mountain out of a mole hill. Ordinarily, I see things and say nothing. But something about this case required a bit more than "turning a blind eye." I think it's because I saw myself in a behavior that I despised. And that [reflection in the mirror](#) required a response. If this missive makes you angry, rather than react, introspect. Because IF it riles you, I would wager that there's something buried deep inside of you that you haven't taken the time to look at. Ask



why you're upset and then look within your own heart and your own motivations. I've had to look within my own self before writing this message. I am as guilty at *discount shopping at the expense of my neighbor* as Mom. I will endeavor to do better. For the sake of our community and our planet, we all must endeavor to do better.

Collectively, we MUST stop nickel and diming African-American businesses and institutions. We simply do not have the wealth, the historical legacy or the institutional muscle power to sustain these practices. **Discount shopping is not a sustainable practice even in mainstream America.** It's why American jobs are leaving American shores. Ultimately, a fast buck saved can have rather slow, protracted consequences over the long run. And it's typically our Black communities and Black people that are hit the hardest. If you must nickel and dime, then do that to Wal-Mart, MicroSoft, McDonald's and Starbucks. They have the cash flow, the demand volume and the financial muscle to sustain the weight of it. But, please don't do it to Black owned ANYTHING—businesses, schools, churches or entertainment. And if I'm honest, we must seek out opportunities to spend our dollars with Mom and Pop shops rather than the corporate giants of the world which disempower our communities. Where are Black-owned restaurants? Integrated out of existence; because, we can't compete... I've said enough.

So, what is the value of love? It's priceless!