

The Truth About Black Hairstyles

The Whole Story Revealed

Kamau & Janice Kenyatta



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Albrightsville, PA

The Truth About Black Hairstyles: The Whole Story Revealed

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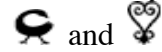
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Adinkra Symbols



and - *Sankofa* means return and get it/learn from the past.



- *Duafe* means wooden comb/beauty, hygiene, and feminine qualities.

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From The...

Introduction

We are fully aware that the subject matter of this book is one that is sensitive for Black people in general and Black women in particular and that it touches a tender and age old wound. With this in mind, let us note from the beginning that we view this work as an effort to heal this wound and not as an attempt to administer unnecessary pain. Yet, we do not apologize for the pain that some will encounter as they progress through the book. It's necessary to the healing process because it dares to address one of the deep wounds that remain unattended from the enslavement and the colonization of African people.

While it addresses an external feature of our African-ness, it really speaks to a deeper psychological malady. Although we specifically direct the contents of this book toward Black women, our aim is not to bash these women. Neither is it our intention to overlook those Black men who engage in the practice of straightening their hair or those who ridicule Black women who wear natural styles. The latter group remains part of the ongoing problem. Our experience, however, indicates and evidence shows that Black women straighten their hair in far greater numbers than Black men. That cannot be logically or intelligently contested.

Since the writing of the first edition of this book under the title *Black Folk's Hair: Secrets, Shame & Liberation*, a few things have happened that are worthy of mention. First, the response to the book was received and welcomed in places we had not intended or anticipated.

For example, the positive response and reaction of white women to the book was completely unforeseen. But even more shocking is the fact that many of them bought additional copies to give as gifts to their "Black girlfriends." Along

those same lines we also found that many white women who have children by Black men have bought the book in great numbers in order to better understand the hair of their children from those unions. This was not an intended market for the book but one that nonetheless has been beneficial to many and one that we see as a necessary part of the discussion.

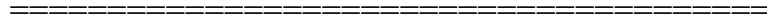
Secondly, the rapidity with which news of the book spread into other parts of the world was a welcome surprise. Two specific occasions regarding this come to mind. On one occasion, we received a phone call from the Netherlands from Black women seeking copies of the book and inviting us to speak at a conference there. On another occasion, we received orders for copies of the book from Germany that totally floored us.

Thirdly, the impact the book has had on women has been tremendous. We have had people read the book and immediately decided to go natural. Others have gone natural after much debate, inner turmoil and soul searching. For example, several students who argued with me (Kamau) as to why they would never wear natural hair have come back a few months or a few years later wearing natural hairstyles. Others have taken a defiant stance claiming they wouldn't be caught dead with "nappy" hair. Still there are those who have had to change to natural styles due to health reasons.

In all the cases, that we've witnessed, where women have gone natural, no one has ever expressed any remorse or regret about their decision. None of them became ugly or uglier (as some thought they would) because they had previously accepted the notion that they would and could not be beautiful with their natural hair. To our knowledge and experience they're all happy—no—delighted with their newfound beauty. There is no power like the power of being yourself—none.

Another unexpected surprise has come from Black men who have purchased the book to give to the women in their lives—mothers, sisters, wives, nieces, cousins and girlfriends. It is also worth mentioning that our predictions that more women would begin to wear natural hairstyles has been proven correct.

We also predicted that there would be an increase in the number of natural hair salons around the country and that, too is proving to be correct.



...atmosphere might create a renewed appreciation and love for our natural hair. We also hope that this work will (1) motivate and inspire sisters (and brothers) to wear their natural hair proudly, (2) help Black men become supportive of women who go natural, and (3) challenge the system that penalizes us for being our true selves and true to ourselves.

We must learn to love our hair just as it is and we must totally accept ourselves, and those like us. If we cannot accept ourselves entirely, it may be because we do not really love ourselves, or our people as we may profess, and thus we run the risk of becoming false, fake, and phony. African people are a great people, but as long as we hate any part of ourselves, we are doomed to the exile reserved only for those who fail to see their own greatness as humans.

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