This creative thesis in playwriting is both an auto ethnographic and ethnographic examination into the politics of Black hair in the 21st century. Although the Black Power Movement in the 1960’s and the present natural hair movement has healed old “wounds,” the residual effects of a racist/discriminatory past still lingers—intraracial hate has permeated into the psyches of African American women. A hair hierarchy of looser hair textures and tighter coils still remains today. Negative beauty formations such as “bad hair” creeps it’s way into the ritual of Black hair styling from mother-daughter, and from friend-to friend. Now that African American women are abandoning chemical/thermal straighteners and adopting more natural styles they must think about how that hinders their chances at finding love. Beadabees, a play in one act, places these negotiations, conflicts, and misunderstandings onstage for Black women to take both a reflexive and reflective look at.
This Thesis titled

BEADABEES: PERFORMING BLACK HAIR POLITICS IN THE 21\textsuperscript{ST} CENTURY

by

Ashley Sade Dunn

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Dedication

To my Mia Bia,

May you grow up…. knowing that you’re beautiful.
Not just because of the clothes you wear or the way you style your hair, but because of
the light that radiates inside of you.

May you grow up…. confident.

May you grow up…. loving others and most of all loving yourself.
You’re beautifully and wonderfully made baby girl, don’t ever forget that.

May you grow up…. feeling supported.

Know that your parents, Auntie Ashley, & your Auntie Ari have your back (who do I
have to knock out?)

May you grow up…. feeling free enough to express yourself as you please.

May you grow up… a Queen. That’s what you are baby girl.

Love,

Auntie Ashley
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I give honor to God, my creator, for being with me through this journey of working towards my thesis. There were many days and nights where I did not know where my inspiration would come from, or whether I would have the right words to put onto paper. In those days and nights He taught me the most important thing; to trust Him always (if I don’t get anything else from this process I better learn that lesson!)

To my grandmothers, Dr. Patricia Johnson, and Dr. Ella Slaughter, thank you for paving the way. Thank you for setting an example for me and for always being women of excellence. I admire you beautiful women.

I want to thank Dr. Paul K. Jackson, who has been more than a Professor to me, but a mentor of six years. Thank you so much for believing in me because there were times where I did not believe in myself. Thank you for pushing me and for opening doors of opportunity. If it was something I wanted to do, you made a way. I wouldn’t be in this position if it were not for you. You are so selfless and have given so much to my life. Thank you.

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I thank my committee members, Dr. Tammy Brown, and Saffron Henke who so kindly agreed to sit on my committee. I am so blessed to be surrounded by smart, strong, and talented women. Dr. Tammy Brown, thank you for sharing your artistic talent with me and for letting me be a part of your journey. I look forward to working with you in the future! Professor Henke, thank you for being willing to come along on this journey with me. You have so much to give to this department and I wish you nothing but the best as you continue your course here at Miami.

(Can I keep it real?) I would be nothing without the support of my family. My mother, my rock, I wish I could pour into your life as much as you have poured into mine. You have such a giving heart and offered your ear to listen to me during those nights where I doubted myself. You continue to be my biggest supporter. I love you, I love you, I love you. To the Trinity, Alexis and Arianna, you are my best friends; there is no love like the love between sisters. Thank you for your support and sisterhood. Courtney, thank you for your friendship these many years. Despite the distance, you always manage to see a show that I am in, and if you didn’t get a chance to see it, your spirit is felt.

I want to thank my fellow grads, Zach, Day Day, Jaime, Josh, Wenya, Ing, and Emma for being a community I can fall back on. You all have looked out for me and supported me throughout this entire process. I wish nothing but the best in your future endeavors.
I thank my actors in Beadabees, Jada, Day Day, Jaime, and Myka for working that script and making it come alive. Your energy and positivity kept me going. Thank you.
Introduction

I will visit my friends’ apartments, which will contain books, photographs of Roman ruins, pianos and oriental carpets. My friends will be white. I need them as an embankment to keep me from reflecting too much upon the fact that I am a Negro. For, like all educated Negroes-out of life and death essential-I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself...But if I had not wavered in my opinion of myself then my hair would never have fallen out. In appearance I am good-looking in a boring way, no glaring Negroid features, medium nose, medium mouth and pale yellow skin. My one defect is that I have a head of frizzy hair, unmistakably Negro kinky hair; and is indisguisable.¹

--Adrienne Kennedy, Funnyhouse of a Negro

No matter how hot the iron, no matter how powerful the chemical, no matter how stringent the mashed-potatoes-and-lye formula of a man’s “process,” neither God nor woman nor Sammy Davis Jr. could straighten the kitchen. The kitchen was permanent, irredeemable, invincible kink. Unassimilably African. No matter what you did, no matter how hard you tried, nothing could dekink a person’s kitchen. So you trimmed it off as best you could.²

-Tenderheaded

Hair holds a substantial amount of significance in both men and women regardless of different cultures. Hair performs through both intricate and even simple styling. The style being a “performative accomplishment, achieved through the reiteration of historically, contingent practices materialized through the body.”³ As a Western woman, to wear a low ponytail denotes power, and a serious disposition; this is a woman in charge. While when it is a man with a ponytail, it speaks in a much different way; a ponytail for a man implies a vagabond lifestyle and maybe an indeterminate sexuality or gender. Hair is very much ritualistic, and goes hand in hand with the representation/presentation of self. In India, the shaving of a young girl’s hair marks her

³ Nicole Dawn Watson, “Making Hair Matter: Untangling Black Hair/Style Politics” (MA Thesis., Queen’s University, 2010), 43.
passage into adulthood. In American culture, a little boy’s first haircut is made into an event. After his hair is cut, the freshly cut locks are wrapped up and saved for the family to revisit and reminiscence as time goes on. Hair is both private and public because while you do your hair in the comforts of your home, the physical manifestation of it, the style itself, is seen for the world to see. For African Americans, in which this thesis is focused, their relationship with hair is ritualistic as well but carries along with it a unique set of politics and history. African American hair is tied up in a racist, supremacist, and discriminatory society of the United States.

Upon entering the United States during the slave trade, Africans were stripped of their native language - both linguistically and semiotically. Prior to enslavement, hair acted as modes of both verbal and non-verbal communication that denoted class, identification to a specific group, gender, status, and was considered a link to their respective gods. However, once on U.S soil, hair for enslaved Africans became a marker of difference and inferiority. Access to a life of freedom was only given to blacks who resembled the dominant white aesthetic. Hair that wasn’t straight was considered “bad” and hair that could pass a “comb test” was considered “good.” Depictions of African Americans in advertisements depicted their hair as coarse, unruly, dry, and unmanageable. Their hair was seen as unwanted and was at the lowest rung of desirability. Hair became the battleground of intraracial tension in the black community, and passed down negative formations and hate deep within the psyches, or as Harvey Young states, the “black critical memory” of African Americans. It still can be felt today in a post colonial/modern and contemporary world.

With white supremacy and patriarchy as dual powers, black women in particular, struggle with both identity and beauty as it relates to the texture of their hair. Historical assumptions about hair have been plentiful. Anthropological and sociological studies have shown men’s natural attraction to long, flowing hair. Yet because of African American women’s “kinky” (used to describe wooly and coarse hair) texture their hair

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occupies “the lowest rung of such schema, seen as neither feminine nor womanly.”

Nappy hair therefore often denies Black women affection, and desire. It not only cuts them off of access to the American dream, but the attainment of love.

During enslavement, to rid one of their “kinky” texture, severe methods such as using eating utensils and animal fat were employed to straighten hair. This left the heads of Black women scabbed and infected-- not allowing it to grow and be healthy. The belief that Black hair is unable to attain long lengths has been held for years in the Black community and is still believed to be true in the 21st century. The lack of growth has been caused by the damage inflicted on the scalp due to resources that are ill equipped to manage Black hair. During the early 1900’s, no-lye relaxers, a chemical straightener with one of the highest alkaline ph levels, offered those with kinky hair textures a remedy, but only for a couple of months until “touch up time.”

As the US moved into the 1960’s, the “Black Power Movement” gathered influence. African Americans abandoned their straight locks that were modeled to look like the white aesthetic, and purposely grew out their kinky hair into the iconic “Afro.” To wear the Afro signified that you were Black and thus the hairstyle became a political statement for men and women during the time. Afro textured hair was a symbol of pride for some African Americans and set them apart from their white counterparts. Gloria Wade-Gayles, a scholar of African American women’s literature, and activist during the Black Power Movement in the 60’s wrote that:

Our appearance had to speak the truth before our lips stretched to sing songs. Never again, I decided, would I alter my hair. In its natural state, my hair would be a badge, a symbol of my self-esteem and racial pride. An act of genuine

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Ayana Bryd and Lori Tharps elaborate in their book, Hair Story how “several methods of straightening the hair were concocted by ingenious Blacks who were short on commercial products. Men would slick axle grease meant for wagon wheels over their hair for a combination dye job and straightener. Women would slather their hair with butter, bacon fat, or goose grease and then use a butter knife heated in a can over a fire as a crude curling iron.”
bonding with black women who were incarcerated in jails all across America and those who were in psychological jails, accepting less from everyone because they believed they deserved less than anyone. I decided to wear an Afro.\(^7\)

For a race of people that had manipulated their image to fit into a certain aesthetic for such a significant amount of time, the Black Power Movement was monumental. The same kinky textured hair that was ridiculed, altered, and hated was now used as a way to unify African Americans with each other. Kinky hair was once used as a way for White Americans to classify and debase Black women and men. In the 60’s and 70’s kinky hair was reclaimed/celebrated and was still used to classify Black women and men, but this time it was in the hands of African Americans. This time it denoted power. James Brown expressed it best in his 1968 hit song, “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud.”

As Gloria Wade-Gayles states, the “act of genuine bonding with black women” occurred because of the Afro but might I also add, it brought with it discrimination within its own community. Wearing the Afro was almost a right, an exclusive way to style your hair, which left those who could not put their hair in its iconic form, out. Those who couldn’t get their hair into an Afro because their texture was not as coarse, or for those who decided to wear it straight were considered a contradiction, a lie, and a joke.\(^8\) Their attempts at undertaking such styles failed performatively and as a result they were not seen as Black enough. African Americans were denied access to the world because of their kinky hair texture and were now denying each other access within their own community. How could one stand for Black Power, if their hair didn’t speak the same language? But as the 70’s ended, the 80’s brought with it the need for African American boomers to find jobs. This resulted in both men and women ditching their natural hair for straighter styles that were more “business friendly.” Straighter styles in the world of commerce remained to be the standard, which for some African American’s trumped their desire to “say it loud.”


In the mid 2000’s to the present there has been yet another shift in Black hair; the abandonment of chemicals in hair styling. Being an African American woman myself, I place myself on this continuum. White and Black society’s standards see my hair as “bad hair” because of its kinky and coarse texture. Employers have pressured me to rid my hair of its texture through the use of hot combs and no-lye relaxers. I have also felt the desire to be wanted and to be seen as feminine. Straight hair has afforded me that. But after years of relaxing and hot combing, Black women, including myself, are left with the damage across our Black bodies, Black hair, and our Black psyches. It is a damage that I realized was self inflicted and should no longer oppress me. With the emergence of YouTube, Black women throughout the diaspora are documenting and archiving through video their severed ties to relaxers and their newly found relationship with their natural hair. Natural hair products like Shea Moisture, Kinky-Curly, and Carol’s Daughters are brands that are ditching the chemicals in their formulas to cater to women who are going the natural way. A natural hair community has grown immensely over the years and has placed us in a continuing movement reminiscent of that in the 60’s and 70’s. But this time, the desire to be natural is not so much a political statement, although hair is always political, but a ritualistic one in which Black women are connecting to themselves.

With this creative thesis in playwriting, I hope to archive and explore the occurrence of the present natural hair movement in the 21st century. While there has been work done by scholars such as Althea Prince, Noliwe Rooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks concerning how hair shapes the identity of Black women, few have placed into dramatic dialogue the state of Black hair politics today. With this new emergence of the natural hair movement, it has brought with it new terminology such as the “hair typing system,” (something that raises new issues) and practices that needs to be put into dialogue. As hair styling is performative, and how there is a shift in the semiotics of hair today, I find it important to explore Black hair through the transformative power of performance. Therefore in this thesis, I have set out to write a performance piece entitled, Beadabees. Beadabees explores Black hair politics in the new age of YouTube and other

social media sites, as well as what this natural hair movement means for Black women today. The piece also explores the issues that Black women face today as it concerns their hair and focuses the attention on how these issues are transmitted internally within the Black female community. How far have we come? What ghosts still haunts us today from the 60’s and 70’s and how can we begin to heal ourselves? These are questions I explore through this playwriting thesis. I also explore hairstyling through the mother-daughter relationship and how that relationship can both nurture and harm the identities of young Black girls. In the writing of the performance piece, my goals are to both learn and remember the history of Black hair.

In the first chapter, a review of literature, “Black Scholars and Their Hair: Black Hair Politics from the 90’s to Present,” I will explore the literary and performance history of Black hair. To begin, I will analyze Noliwe Rooks’ important work, *Hair Raising*, which was published in 1996. Noliwe Rooks is considered one of the first scholars to dialogue about Black hair politics, and takes both a bio-ethnographic and historiographic approach in *Hair Raising*. Using advertisements in the United States from the 1800’s to the 1980’s, Rooks works to uncover the ways in which African American women make meaning through their hair and how that meaning reveals itself culturally. The chapter also explores the work of Ayana Bryd’s, *Hair Story*, which is a historiographic analysis of Black hair from the 1500’s (pre enslavement) to Black hair in the early 2000’s. *Hair Story* gives a descriptive account of the meaning of hair for Africans before enslavement and how that meaning and styling has changed over the years. Both *Hair Story* and *Hair Raising* have provided me with the historical framework needed to ground and influence my thesis.

The next piece of scholarship I analyze is Juliette Harris and Pamela Johnson’s, *Tenderheaded: A Comb-Bending Collection of Hair Stories*. *Tenderheaded* is an anthology of works by scholars and artists such as Ntozake Shange, A’Lelia Bundles, Lisa Jones, bell hooks, Gloria Wade-Gayles, and many more as it concerns their hair. The narratives of Black women are not the same, and *Tenderheaded* discusses the pluralities of Black hair. It also puts into dialogue how Black women navigate through love, family, community, and identity. *Tenderheaded* allowed me to move away from
my long held belief that straight hair implied self-hate, and the importance of hearing/sharing multiple narratives surrounding hair. What this on-going natural movement seeks to do is to allow a space where Black women can fully express themselves as they see fit and by their own terms; no matter the style. I also learned through the casual conversation with Dr. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, a professor of English literature at Miami University, who is natural herself, that this movement is not a straight vs. natural debate, but rather how Black women choose to express themselves. This movement begins to move away from the binary that was in the 60’s and 70’s.

I analyze the work of bell hooks, who also uses a bio-ethnographic methodology in her essay, “Straightening our Hair” in Z Magazine. hooks describes her personal experience with the hot comb, and how such a ritual, although tied to its discriminatory past, can be a moment of bonding between Black women. Hot combing can only become a moment of bonding if it is outside the realms of oppressive powers; those oppressive powers being patriarchy and white supremacy. I also do a close analysis on the works of George C. Wolfe’s The Colored Museum, Lynn Nottage’s Crumbs from the Table of Joy, Tre Anthony’s da Kink in my Hair, and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s performance group, Urban Bush Women. Many of the creative works mentioned in this thesis takes a Black feminist approach, which has provided me with the structure, and helped influenced the creation of characters in my piece.

The second chapter is the performance piece, Beadabees, which is followed by the conclusion of this thesis. The conclusion includes the inspiration behind Beadabees, my own personal hair story, as well as future plans for the performance piece.
Chapter 1: Black Scholars and Their Hair: Literature Review of Black Hair Politics from the 1990’s to Present

If you want to know about a woman, a black woman that is, touch her hair. ‘Cause our hair carries our journey. ‘Cause that’s where we carry all our hopes, all our dreams, our hurt, our disappointments, they’re all in our hair. ¹⁰

-Tre Anthony, *da Kink in my Hair*

Harvey Young, in *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory and the Black Body*, writes about the black body as fetish and souvenir during the horrific lynching practices in America’s racial history. He writes, “these past experiences survive in the present, across new and present bodies, because the body itself remembers the violence that was directed against it.”¹¹ Black women experience both physical and psychological “violence” when it concerns their hair. During hair sessions in the kitchen, the burning of the hot comb or relaxer cannot only leave physical scars, but emotional ones as well. To touch a Black woman’s hair, as Novelette does in Tre Anthony’s *da Kink in my Hair*, would allow one to unearth such violence inflicted and the construction of identity. This violence, influences the “black habitus,” which are social expectations incorporated into the individual, while the individual projects those expectations back upon society.¹²

The black “habitus” allows one to read the black body as socially and continually constructed. Hair is continually and socially constructed through the dialogue and the physical act of hair styling. These hair sessions at home, have served as haunted sites of oppression and the unfortunate passing on of a history interweaved with self-hate.

This haunting explains why so many Black scholars, writers, artists, and theatre practitioners have and are currently “probing the intersection between everyday,


¹¹ Young, *Embodying Black Experience*, 653.

quotidian Black hair and hyper charged, racialized Black hair.” The “everyday, quotidian Black hair” is seen in the weekly kitchen stylings between mother and daughter, the weekly hair appointments at their chosen salon, or your weekly pampering session in the comforts of your bathroom or bedroom. Noliwe Rooks, a prominent, leading Black scholar in the politics of Black hair, agrees with this observation and states, “it is not surprising that hair and the politics of hair appear frequently in contemporary writings of African American women. Hair becomes racialized through the utterances, manipulations, and negative beauty formations transcribed to it through the styling. “In the doing of hair one does race […] the history and the politics of hair is the history and the politics of race.” Black artists and scholars also probe into the politics of hair in their works because hair is as public as it is private/personal. Each Black artists’ “habitus” is affected by their personal experiences.

**Hair Raising and Hair Story: The History of Black Hair**

Published in 1996, Noliwe’s book, *Hair Raising*, examines hair advertisements in the late 19th and early 20th century that are marketed to African American women. Noliwe Rooks is an associate professor of Africana Studies, Gender and Sexuality at Cornell University. She is also credited as being one of the first scholars to discuss the politics surrounding African American hair. Rooks, argues that through hair advertisements in the late 1800’s through the late 1980’s, African American female identity is influenced and constructed.

Noliwe opens the dialogue with a passage from Charlotte Forten Grimké, an African American anti-slavery activist and poet during the Civil War. Grimké writes in her journal how she is “under-going self-examination.” She finds herself “without the gifts of Nature, wit, beauty and talent,” and that another woman Hattie Purvis, is “quite

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15 Nicole Dawn Watson, “Making Hair Matter: Untangling Black Hair/Style Politics” (MA thesis., Queen’s University, 2010), 52-3.
attractive, with such long, light hair, and beautiful blue eyes.”  Those who were around her talked about Charlotte, a free and educated Black woman during that time, as a woman with “exquisite refinement,” and “ladylike and engaging manners, and personal appearance.” But why, as Rooks questions, does Charlotte Grimké hold such a low perception of herself despite her public appeal? Noliwe offers two possible points of entry; the white mistress as the standard of beauty, and the racial hierarchy maintained by White companies through their advertisements aimed at an African American audience. Skin bleaching creams, and hair straighteners were targeted at African Americans in order to “help” them advance in the world and to be seen as beautiful. Lighter skin, long hair, and lighter eyes, like the ones Charlotte wished to have, was the yardstick of beauty. While kinkier hair, dark skin, and broad noses were seen as grotesque and needed to be corrected. This ideology was illustrated through an advertisement for “Black Skin Remover and Hair Straightener” where you see the “before” and “after” drawings of a woman.

The “before” drawing is an outline inked in so dark that one cannot make out the woman’s features. However, her forehead slopes forward sharply, and her nose is broad and short. Her hair is short, curly, and looks uncombed. The “after” drawing shows the change that will occur once the product is used. The woman’s hair has become long and straight and is neatly styled. Her skin is white and her forehead no longer slopes forward as drastically. Her nose has become long and aquiline. Not only has her skin color and hair texture changed, but so has her bone structure.

The product markets itself as one that can transform ones unruly, grotesque, and harsh features, into a soft, more visible (the “after” photo is not blurred out but has a clear outline), and beautiful appearance. As African Americans gained their freedom after

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slavery, other advertisements during that time, mentioned how African Americans owe it to themselves “as well as to others who are interested in you, to make yourself as attractive as possible. Attractiveness will contribute much to your success—both socially and commercially.”

Not only were European features deemed more ideal, but also granted newly freed slaves the access to the world they always wanted. The remedy or potion was only pennies and dollars away.

In Rooks’ second chapter, “Advertising Contradictions,” she analyzes Madam CJ Walker’s influence in Black hair care. Walker, who is noted as the first woman to become a self-made millionaire in America, provided African American women with hair products that promised to heal their scalps from its abusive history. Walker was inspired to create hair remedies because of her own scalp conditions. Madam CJ Walker not only sold her products herself, but employed “agents” to sell the “Walker system” products to their own clients. These agents were trained through Walker’s Lelia College. Once they graduated the program, they were allowed to sell and use Walker’s system. African American women became the owners and promoters of their own business, as they touted Walker’s products door to door to their customers. Such a thing angered many middle-class African American men because they “believed that a woman’s place was in the home.”

This did not deter Walker and she encouraged her agents to use her own story as testimony to appeal to customers. During the National Negro Business League in 1912, Walker states in a speech that:

I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. I was promoted from there to the washtub. Then I was promoted to the cook kitchen, and from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations.

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21 The Walker System included a Vegetable shampoo for washing, “Wonderful Hair Grower,” that contained medication to combat dandruff, and also a hot comb that was used to straighten the hair.

22 Rooks, _Hair Raising_, 59.

23 Rooks, _Hair Raising_, 58.
Walker also appeals to the audience by sharing with them the problems she faced with her own hair and placed herself in the advertisements. “Walker speaks to African American women as a fellow sufferer from the problems her product will cure. Because her hair grower worked for her, it will work for them.”\textsuperscript{24} She went through a period in her life where she could not get her hair to grow, and noticed that African Americans during that time did not have the “hair preparations” needed to take care of their hair. One particular advertisement that Walker used in 1905 and many years more after that, contained three photos of her. “The middle shot shows a young Walker with her hair pulled back over her ears and the front portion of the style curled over her forehead.”\textsuperscript{25} The words “Before Using” is placed over the bottom of the box. The last two pictures are on either side of the middle picture and shows Walker with hair that is past shoulder length. Rooks notes that in the picture of Walker with shoulder length hair, she is facing the camera directly. But in the shot with her shorter hair she “looks down and off to the side.”\textsuperscript{26} The word “After” is never used for the photos with her longer hair. How might this advertisement interact with the straightening products and skin whitener products from the White owned company mentioned earlier above?

Both advertisements are concerned with hair, but the authors are completely different. Madam CJ Walker, a freed Black woman, created products that were designed to both “focus on health as well as physical and mental well-being.”\textsuperscript{27} Her agents would provide a full service to their clients by cleansing their hair with Walker’s vegetable shampoo, then treating it with her “Wonderful Hair Grower,” and lastly, straightening the tresses with a hot comb.

Walker was dealt a tough critique from activists such Booker T. Washington who felt that her use of the hot comb was a way to emulate whiteness. There was also a misconception that Walker created the hot comb herself, which she denied many times.

\textsuperscript{24} Rooks , \textit{Hair Raising}, 62.

\textsuperscript{25} Rooks, \textit{Hair Raising}, 60.

\textsuperscript{26} Rooks, \textit{Hair Raising}, 60.

\textsuperscript{27} Rooks, \textit{Hair Raising}, 64.
In fact, the hot comb initial origins has root in France as early as 1845 while Walker was born in 1867. Although Walker was not against women straightening their hair, she saw her system as a way for women to remedy their hair growth problems, and for their inner beauty to match their outer manifestations. By placing herself in the ad, she also places her narrative, and her physical body. She connects with her Black female audience to let them know that she was in their shoes, and that they can achieve the length she has.

This contrasts greatly with the advertisement of the White owned company in the 1900’s. The White owned company created an illustration of two figures facing each other. The face to the left of the picture was completely blacked out with untamed hair and features, while the picture to the right was white with a defined outline, and tame hair. Its intention was to transform African American women’s features to that of the white aesthetic which treated Black features as diseases and ailments to be cured. Rooks moves on to write about how in the late 1940’s, Lustrasilk, a White owned hair company, had advertisements that emphasized a “lack” of beauty in African American women.

It is important to note that throughout Noliwe’s analysis, she interjects her personal “hair story” into her work. Rooks, refers to herself as a “black activist baby” that grew up in the 70’s, whose mother instilled in her the pride to wear her natural hair. But as she went out into the world and away from her Afrocentric upbringing, Rooks found the pressure to conform like other Black women with relaxers in her college setting. To her mother’s dismay, she straightened her hair, which opened Noliwe’s eyes to the “intergenerational struggle that exposed both tensions and contradictions in my [her] family and spoke to larger concerns with which African Americans in the mid-seventies were grappling.” Rooks learned that hair was not only a personal statement or choice but that it had political ramifications due to its styling in her Black community and the world at large.

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28 Rooks, *Hair Raising*, 64.

Hair Story

Ayana Bryd and Lori Tharps who are both writers with interests in identity and hair, provide a historiographic look into black hair through their work *Hair Story*. Their work is not autoethnographic as Rooks’, but provides a historiographic look into the history of Black hair. The book begins in Africa, pre slave trade, where hair functioned as “carriers of messages” that indicated a person’s wealth, gender, ethnic identity, marital status, age, geographic origin, and rank within the community.”

Once captured as slaves and transported to the US however, their hair was shaved away or covered, which stripped Africans from their ways of communicating both verbally and semiotically. Skin along with hair became physical markers that differentiated the superior white race, to the inferior Black race. A “good” and “bad” hair aesthetic developed in which, “good hair was thought of as long and lacking kink, tight curls, and frizz. Bad hair was the antithesis, namely African hair in its purest form. White slave masters reinforced the “good-hair,” light-skinned, straighter-haired slaves for the best positions within his household, he showed they were more desirable.”

The “elevated” position of these “desired slaves” with lighter skin and looser hair textures, caused an intraracial hate/discrimination within the African American community. Thus a hair hierarchy pinning Blacks against other Blacks emerged.

The Importance of Plurality: Black Hair Narratives

During my search for the history of Black hair, I discovered that writings, essays, and books surrounding it were embedded with the hair story of the author. Noliwe Rooks shared her story of growing up in a home that promoted Black pride while bell hooks in the article “Straightening Our Hair” reflects on the ritual of hot combing in her mother’s kitchen. While some stories overlap and share similarities, no two are the same. When it comes to hair and Black women it *cannot* be separated from personal narrative. Whether an author’s personal narrative or the telling of other stories, these confessions fully express the joy and at times pain that Black women experience. Since “hair invokes

personal and representative experience,” the personal and confessional narratives fill in areas of history and voices that have been buried. The method in which these authors chose to present their work is in the form of both auto-ethnography and ethnography. Auto-ethnography allows for critical distance and intimacy to occur. In terms of performance, auto-ethnography allows one to look at the self as other which enables a critique to happen. It also facilitates moments of “deep personal renovation.” As hair narratives are told, the archive surely fills. These authors write from a place of insider/outsider in order to comment on the state of Black hair politics. It is such a method that I employed in Beadabee’s. I will briefly describe the writings of Lisa Jones, Lanita Jacobs-Huey, Pamela Anderson, Juliette Harris, Althea Prince and Aliona Gibson. It is through their writings that I have learned the importance of including plural narratives as my work is distinctly womanist.

**Tenderheaded: A Comb-Bending Collection of Hair Stories**

One of the “tasks” that womanists seek to engage is “uncovering the roots of a womanist tradition through examination and reintegration of black women’s experience into black history in particular and American history in general.” It also values and desires to bring to light the multiple narratives of the Black female experience. In writing for my creative thesis, the biases I have towards hair began to peek through. I believed the ideology that straight hair is always oppressive. As I researched, I discovered that Black women who decide to straighten their hair are not always trying to attain the white aesthetic. For some it is out of convenience, but for others, as bell hooks states, is “a survival strategy. It is easier to function in this society with straightened hair.” As someone who is natural, I have taken the strong stance of Oluwaseyi Dada in Beadabee’s, in her views that wearing your hair straight is a reflection of self-hate. In analyzing the

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33 Nicole Gurgel, “Radical Possibilities: Anti-Racist Performance/Practice in 900 Gallons” (MA thesis., The University of Texas at Austin), 31.


text, *Tenderheaded: A Comb-Bending Collection of Hair Stories* (2001), I have come to know this opinion to be both limiting and that it completely goes against the underlining purpose of this movement, which is Black female self-expression.

This idea of self-hate is a notion that has been held for many years by the general public and scholars alike. Mariame Kaba, a Chicago-based organizer and educator (and one of the contributors to *Tenderheaded*), calls this ideology the “social pathology model.” The social pathology model believes that in order for Black people to embrace their blackness, they must embrace and “rediscover” their natural beauty. She writes that the social pathology model simply attributes…

...the practice of hair straightening to racism. This is without a doubt part of the answer. However, that group often ignores or misses the complicated interplay between racism, classism, and sexism. Their analysis suggests that race tends to take precedence over other aspects of social relations, such as gender and class. Race does provide the framework through which we conceive of some hair as “good” and other hair as “bad.” However, hair becomes a more complex topic for black women because they are women.

To refer back to the White advertisement analyzed in Noliwe Rooks’ text, Black women were not only straightening their hair to pursue whiteness but to also pursue white power and the privilege that comes with it. Straight hair offers access, and was one of the considerations made as the boomers in the 80’s desired to return to work. “In this context, then, a hairstyle is chosen to escape social and economic disadvantage. The economically vulnerable position that many black women find themselves in dissuades them from rocking the boat.”

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36 Harris and Johnson, *Tenderheaded*, 104.
37 Harris and Johnson, *Tenderheaded*, 106.
38 Harris and Johnson, *Tenderheaded*, 105-6.
Tenderheaded was written by Juliette Harris and Pamela Johnson. Harris is the editor of International Review of African-American Art, and Pamela Johnson was the former senior editor of Essence magazine, but is now Essence’s columnist. They both collaborated together to create Tenderheaded, a collection of stories, poems, and art that discusses Black hair. The contributors to the collected work are from prominent scholars and figures such as Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison, A’lelia Bundles, Lisa Jones, and Susan L. Taylor. It takes a very ethnographic approach, and artistic one to showcase the many perspectives of black hair narrative. Tenderheaded provides multiple narratives from what hair meant to Black women during slavery times in its chapter entitled “Heads of Steam.” It also shares the stories of women who wear “store-bought hair” as well as women who “loc” and braid their hair. The book works to show, like Ayana Bryd with Hair Story, a chronology of black hair and what it meant in various time periods.

Straightening Our Hair

bell hooks, in her essay, “Straightening Our Hair” in Z Magazine reflects on the ritualistic power of her hair sessions, which involved the hot comb, with her mother. She also goes on to say how “[hair pressing] and in a way straight hair was connected solely with rites of initiation into womanhood.” She states, “hair pressing was a ritual of black women’s culture-of intimacy.”... “It was a moment of creativity, a moment of change.” This moment of change is what hooks feels as a little girl. She anxiously awaited the time she could finally get her hair hot combed. Because hooks’ hair was not as kinky as her sisters, she could not participate in the hot combing sessions, and furthermore she could not participate in the initiation into womanhood. Once granted entry into the ritual of hot combing, hooks could then be entered into community between mother and daughter, and while in the salon, she could be connected woman to woman. Thus providing a space for healing and intimacy to occur, which is very much missing in African American female relationships.

A Selective Look at Other Voices


Dr. Ingrid Banks’ book, *Hair matters* (2000), also touches on standards of beauty and its damaging effects on Black identity. Banks is the Associate Professor of Black Studies at UC Santa Barbara with interests in black feminist theory, beauty culture, and the politics of the body. *Hair matters* seeks to show the significance of hair in black women’s lives, and how it shapes the ideas women have concerning race, gender, class, identity, and beauty. The methodology is ethnographic where she interviewed 61 women, and conducted five focus-group sessions in the span of a year (1996-1997) concerning their own personal experiences and opinions.

Lisa Jones’ book, *Bulletproof Diva* (1997) not only provides discourses surrounding Black hair, but Black culture in present day America. Jones is a staff writer for the *The Village Voice* and has also authored three books with Spike Lee. She is a graduate of Yale University and New York University’s Graduate School of Film and Television. *Bulletproof Diva* is a collection of essays, as well as Jones’ own perspective concerning Black culture in present day America. It explores issues surrounding race, sex (butt theory), as well as analyzing the politics of Black hair. *Bulletproof Diva* is ethnographic and at times Jones’ own narration of personal experiences.

Lanita Jacobs-Huey’s book, *From Kitchen to Parlor* (2006), takes its reader to beauty shops, and discuses the discourse that happens in various beauty parlors. Lanita is an anthropology professor at the University of California with an interest in analyzing African-Americans in film. *From the Kitchen to the Parlor* looks at the symbolic and performative nature of hair and its significance to Black women’s culture. Lanita analyzes how Black women use language to negotiate the significance of hair, which
Lanita feels is a gap in research that needs to be filled. She takes an ethnographic approach by visiting hair parlors in both the United States and the UK (the first shop being her mother’s own hair salon). Huey pulls from the literature of African American women’s speech practices from prominent Black scholars in the field to support her analysis. This text interacts so well with Trey Anthony’s play, *da Kink in my Hair*, which I will be discussing later on in the review.

**The Pecola Truth**

A “good” and “bad” hair aesthetic continues to plague the psyche of Blacks today, particularly African American women. In a country where straighter hair is ideal, African American women must manipulate their naps to progress in the workplace, be accepted among their peers, and acquire love. These manipulations include the use of a hot comb, a metal comb that is heated either electronically or by the heat of the stove, and a no-lye chemical straightener known as a relaxer. These processes are at times traumatic because it breaks the original makeup of hair, which destroys its protein bonds. This drastic change shakes the identity of African American woman. It leaves the perception that a Black woman’s hair in its natural state is out of control and must be subdued with severe treatment such as heat and chemicals. A comb is just not enough. It is what Althea Prince, an award-winning author with a focus in African Caribbean peoples in metropolitan communities, describes as the “Pecola truth.” “Pecola’s truth is the hegemonic, viselike grip of society’s yardstick of beauty. This yardstick penetrates consciousness, and is internalized by the individual to become their [my own emphasis] truth.” This yardstick being, the straight hair, blue eyes, and light skin, beauty aesthetic. Prince takes Pecola from Toni Morrison’s book, *The Bluest Eye*. Pecola is young black girl with dark skin, and by other people’s standards undesirable features. She is ridiculed, taunted by her peers, and then later sexually abused by her father. Her

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most wanted request is to have blue eyes because with blue eyes she can be beautiful and begin to fit into an aesthetic unlike her own.

Something also interesting to note is that discussions surrounding hair are not just limited to African American women but also Black men who are dialoging about hair as well. In an essay entitled “Language and Girlhood: Conceptualizing Black Feminist Thought in “Happy to be Nappy” from Women and Language, Mark Hopson, a professor at George Mason University reflects on hair and raising a young black daughter. Hopson centers himself in “Language and Girlhood,” as a father to a young daughter who wished herself to be white, like Pecola in The Bluest Eye, because she was the only person in her kindergarten class who had dark skin. He asserts that popular images help foster negative outlooks in young Black girls. Hopson pulls from Black feminist thought, and does a close reading of bell hook’s children’s book, Happy to be Nappy to show how appreciation of “nappy” hair reverses the negative outlook of image.

**Black Hair Politics in Theatre**

Hair is also interwoven in the writings, plays, and novels of both Black women and men. I will do a close reading specifically on the writings and performances of Black artists to show how hair shapes identity, and how it can at the same time grant and deny access to a world of love, financial independence, and interpersonal relationships. These writings speak on the politics of hair and how black woman negotiate under those terms. These works also have inspired the creative process of Beadabeees, which I will elaborate about in my conclusion.

The first play I will do a close reading of is Trey Anthony’s da Kink in my Hair. Anthony’s play is situated in a Caribbean hair salon in Toronto, Canada and provides a platform for the stories of eight women to be voiced through the healing power of hairdressing. The play ends on somber and yet celebratory tone, as a woman named Nia, who has dark skin and “nappy” hair, must fight the demons of a discriminatory mother. The same “Pecola” character from Toni Morrison’s, The Bluest Eye, and Ingrid Banks’ analysis can be seen in Nia. She must come to accept her blackness, which was
condemned at an early age. *da Kink in my Hair*, creates a dialogue to discuss how negative beauty formations are passed down from mother-to-daughter.

Although written by an African American man, the second piece of text I will analyze is George C. Wolfe’s, “The Hair Piece” scene in the play, *The Colored Museum*. “The Hair Piece” speaks on the negotiations and at times compromises, Black women make with their hair to keep a man. The woman who appears in the vignette has a baldhead and is prepping herself while her two wigs, a nappy afro, and straight locks, begin a conversation with her. Both of the wigs argue with the woman and amongst themselves about who should be worn during her meeting with her boyfriend to break up with him. While it is true that the female characters in George C. Wolfe’s repertoire are problematic, I still believe that “The Hair Piece” holds value. The vignette speaks not only to the politics of hair in romantic relationships but also the “hair texture wars” that is/has been occurring in the Black community.

The next piece that I will do a close reading of is a case study called, “The Hair Parties Project Case Study: Urban Bush Women,” by Caron Atlas, a liaison for *Animating Democracy*, a program of Americans for the Arts. This case study follows the Brooklyn-based dance performance group, Urban Bush Women (UBW) and the “The Hair Parties” they hosted in 2001-2 in their community of Brooklyn. UBW hosted “hair parties” with groups of African American women and men (or sometimes even a white, and mixed race audience) to discuss hair and to collect the stories in order to inspire UBW’s “HairStories” performance piece. Hair became a point of entry to have a dialogue about large societal issues such as race, class, politics, gentrification, and gender.

The last piece of writing I will analyze is Lynn Nottage’s play *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* which is a coming of age story of a young Black girl named Ernestine Crump. Situated in New York, Ernestine’s family has lost their mother and must fight to cope in a racist world in the 1950’s. The Crump family’s world gets turned upside down when Aunt Lily, Ernestine’s mother’s sister, comes to stay with them. Aunt Lily brings with her ideals/politics that appear to be too “radical” for the family to handle. This places Lily in conflict with her conservative brother in-law and past lover, Godfrey.
Healing and intimacy can be seen in Trey Anthony’s *da Kink in my Hair*, a play in two acts that consist of eight women. Towards the end of the play, *da Kink in my Hair* touches on the mother-daughter relationship with hair, and how that relationship can negatively influence the self-esteem and identity of women. This contrasts with hooks’ relationship with the hot comb and my own. The mother-daughter relationship is so important to *Beadabees* because now that we are in this ongoing natural hair movement, oppression is still happening within our own communities. It is happening in our kitchens and homes and being transmitted by the matriarch.

Trey Anthony is a Canadian comedian and playwright that has credits as a writer on *The Chris Rock Show* and *After Hours with Kenny Robinson*. Anthony first premiered *da Kink in my Hair* at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2001. The play was later adapted into a television show in 2007 and ran for two seasons before it was canceled. *da Kink in my Hair* is narrated through Novelette, the hair shop owner who not only serves as the community hair dresser but also the community healer. The rest of the play consists of seven other women who serve as “griots,” the praise singers, dancers, and musicians in the piece. As each character enters into Novelette’s shop it is through her, or rather the laying of her hands in the heads of her patrons, that we learn of the stories of the seven women included in the play.

*Novelette places her fingers deep into Shawnette’s hair. As her fingers reach into Shawnette’s hair the Griots sing a soft melody and there is a lighting transition. Shawnette gets up from the chair and walks to the centre spotlight*

Shawnette: I got a kink in my hair.

Chorus: Kink. Kink in my hair.

Shawnette: You use to love to play with that kink in my hair when it was all sweaty and damp. Kink hair matted to my face. Sweat and your love dripping between my thighs. My love and me imprinted on your ebony skin.

Shawnette: We had a plan. I got another job so you could go to med school. (beat) Left you studying at night as I caught the five downtown train of Faith, connecting to the number twenty-three bus of Hope. I cleaned those offices and I dreamed.
Chorus: Dreamed

During Shawnette’s revelation of story, the rest of the women who are not telling their stories become the “griots” or chorus providing Shawnette with a call and response. They are Shawnette’s support system and are there with her along the way as she works through the mistreatment she feels from her partner. At the end of story, the chorus sings a soft melody and Shawnette returns back to her chair as Novelette finishes twisting her hair. These songs and dance becomes moments of resistance, sisterhood, and healing.

Towards the end of the play, one of Novelette’s last customers, Nia, enters and demands that Novelette cuts all of her hair off. Nia, like Pecola, is a woman who is clouded with the desire to “pass” in the world. She comes to the shop because she is preparing for the funeral of her mother. The relationship she had with her mother was severely strained because Nia’s mother could not stand to see her daughter’s “blackness.”

Nia: Yeah you knew she had skipped more classes than she had ever gone to. Hung out with the wrong crowd. Dropped out of high school because she was pregnant. But you conveniently forgot all of this because she had given birth to her light brown bundle of joy. (two beats) Her kid’s hair was so wavy, I thought you would jump right in for a swim. You were such a proud grandmother. Quickly calling all the family and telling them how the baby could easily pass for white. (shakes her head in disbelief) And I just wanted to go over there and smack you in your damn black, ugly face and ask you, what about me! What about Tasha? Did you know that her kindergarten teacher says she is reading at a second grade level? But wouldn’t give a fuck would you because you can’t find a wave in Tasha’s hair.

Nia’s mother cannot accept Nia’s child, despite her successes because she is unable to “pass,” which enables her to fit into the white definition of beauty. But she can easily accept Sandy, the lighter of the two and the daughter who chose to lay with the right man; a man who was not dark skinned. In her mother’s eyes, Nia has produced another Black baby that will not make it in the world. Beverly Greene, Lisa Whitten, and Judith White, write about the psychological trauma similar to that of Nia’s mother in their essay “Hair Texture, Length, and Style as a Metaphor in the African American Mother-Daughter

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Relationship: Considerations in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy” in the book, *Psychotherapy with African American Women* (2000). Greene, Whitten, and White are all clinical psychologists with interests in institutionalized racism, sexism, and African centered theory. Through the essay, the authors seek to bring to light an area of psychological literature that has been ignored in the US. The authors urge clinicians to use psychodynamic techniques in order to inquire about the effects hair has on black women. This particular essay takes a historiographic approach, and analyzes the relationship between mothers and their daughters. “How an African American mother feels about herself may be reflected in her attitudes and care not only of her own hair but also in her attitudes toward and care of her daughter’s hair.”

We see Nia’s mother’s attitudes towards her hair in this next excerpt from the play:

Nia: You hated my blackness. Ranted and raved every Sunday afternoon as you heated up the pressing comb to press my bad hair. While Sandy ran outside. The good hair. The light one. The right one. We stayed in the hot kitchen and I pinned my ears back holding my breath, not daring to move because I didn’t want to get burnt again. And as you fried and cooked my bad hair, you cursed my blackness. Hating to see the black in me.47

With her sister excluded from the act of getting her hair hot combed, Nia began to conjecture that her hair was so bad that it needed to be “fried” by the hot comb. The hot combing process for Nia’s mother, served as a way to purge or get rid of Nia’s blackness. This in turn, passed on negative beauty formations to Nia, which made her hate her blackness and her identity. Dressed in all black, Nia ends her confession by calling out to her mother and proclaiming, “I’ve been wearing black my whole life.” By *wearing* black her whole life Nia means *being* Black her whole life. The griots enter one last time in the play to stand in solidarity with Nia. The women all state proudly:

Chorus: I’ve been wearing black all my life.

Nia looks at them. This sends them into a healing song, in which they rock together. They perform a healing ceremony that goes through various emotions of discovery, anger, self-healing, and love. The dance also offers Nia the pride,


self-identity, comfort, love, and joy of being a black woman. The women dance a celebratory dance. This is a celebration. A celebration of life.48

Through this celebratory dance Nia is able to come into loving the blackness her mother tried so hard to erase. She ultimately came to terms with her identity.

**The Colored Museum**

George C. Wolfe is a Tony award-winning director and Obie award recipient. His play, *The Colored Museum* consists of 11 different exhibitions that engage certain themes, and issues that occur in African American culture through satire. *The Colored Museum* first premiered on March 26, 1986 at the Crossroads Theatre Company. One scene, entitled “The Hair Piece” begins with a woman getting ready to go out while her two wigs, an Afro and a straight hairstyle have a debate amongst each other. The two wigs represent two aesthetics and standards; the straight, white European aesthetic, and the kinky (I’m black & I’m proud) African/African American aesthetic. They also represent The Woman’s conscious, as she is in a constant battle of how to wear her hair. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the 60s and 70s were the start of the Black Power Movement, which made growing and wearing an Afro a political statement. The higher and rounder you could get your Afro the better. Those people who did not have the kinks to have their hair in Afro form were shunned and were not considered Black enough.

As the US moved into the 80s and 90s there was a shift away from Afros and into straighter styles. To get a job and to be considered as “professional” one had to look the part, and braids or other natural styles unfortunately, did not make the cut. “It’s the advantages of straightened styles that they [Black women] want, not the attributes of another race. In fact some women believe their fortunes are tied to their straightened tresses.49 To have straight hair was not in all cases a desire to be white, but a way in which to attain and keep a job. “The relaxer is also a factor in the dress-for-success formula. In corporate America or anywhere a suit and tie is de rigueur, relaxed was the

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way to go.”

With this play premiering in 1986, it provides commentary to the shifts hair was making at that time.

At the start of the scene we see The Woman looking into a mirror while she is covered in a towel. She uncovers her head, which reveals her baldness. Startled to see her lack of hair, The Woman’s two wigs, Janine-the afro, and LaWanda-the straight hairstyle start to talk about the trauma The Woman has put her hair through.

Janine: *(laughing)* Just look at the poor thing, trying to paint some life onto that face of hers. You’d think by now she’d realize it’s the hair. It’s all about the hair.

Lawanda: What hair! She ain’t got no hair! She done fried, dyed, de-chemicalized her shit to death.

Janine: And all that’s left is that buck-naked scalp of hers, sittin’ up there apologizin’ for being odd shaped and ugly.

LaWanda: *(Laughing with Janine)* Girl, stop!

Janine: I ain’t sayin’ nuthin’ but the truth.

LaWanda/Janine: The bitch is bald! *(They laugh.)*

The chemical processes have caused The Woman to lose her hair, which is a common thing that does occur when using products as harsh as a relaxer. We later find out in the following lines the reason behind why she has put her through such processes. She ultimately ends up bald because as her boyfriend’s ideologies shifted, so did her hair.

Janine: And all over some man.

LaWanda: I tell ya, girl, I just don’t understand it. I mean, look at her. She’s got a right nice face, a good head on her shoulders. A good job even. And she’s got to go fall in love with that fool.

Janine: That political quick-change artist. Everytime the nigga went and changed his ideology, she went and changed her hair to fit the occasion.

Here we see that The Woman didn’t change her hair for a job but changed her hair for a lover. With each change done to The Woman’s hair she slowly loses her own identity,

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50 Raines, “Relax your Mind,” 95.
layer by layer until she is bald. In Rooks’ *HairRaising* we see politics of hair as it concerns retaining and acquiring a job. In this example, we see the negotiations Black women make for love. Since The Woman is left with no hair, she must pick which wig she wants to wear to the meeting she has with her boyfriend that night to break up with him. The two hair wigs begin to go into their rationale as to why she should pick one over the other.

Janine: No, tell her you’re wearing me.

*(there is a pause)*

LaWanda: Well?

Janine: Well?

Woman: I ah…actually hadn’t made up my mind.

Janine: *(Going off)* What do you mean you ain’t made up your mind! After all that fool has put you through, you gonna need all the attitude you can get and there is nothing like attitude and a healthy head of kinks to make his shit shrivel like it should! That’s right! When you wearin’ me, you lettin’ him know he ain’t gonna get no sweet-talkin’ comb through your love without some serious resistance. No-no! The kink of my head is like the kink of your heart and neither is about to be hot-pressed into surrender.\(^{52}\)

Janine evokes rhetoric that is of Black pride and resistance. According to Janine, if The Woman wants to really prove to her lover that she means business she must wear her Afro, the symbol of resistance and self-pride in the 70’s. By wearing the straighter wig, The Woman surrenders her power and her blackness. This exchange is therefore not just about the man but also the “hair wars” between straight and nappy. This “surrendering” brings up the discussion of whether straightening one’s naps was to surrender to white dominance. The two wigs address The Woman in the scene but as the dialogue deepens they confront each other.

LaWanda: That shit is so tired. The last time attitude worked on anybody was 1968. Janine girl, you need to get over it and get on with it. You can toss me back, shake me from side to side, all the while screaming, “I want you out of my life forever!!!” And not only will I come bouncing back for more, but you just

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might win an Academy Award for best performance by a head of hair in a
dramatic role.

*The Woman, unable to take it, begins to bit off her fake nails, as LaWanda and
Janine go at each other*)

LaWanda: Set the bitch straight. Let her know there is no way she could even
begin to compete with me. I am quality. She is kink. I am exotic. She is
common. I am class and she is trash.

Janine: You think you cute. She thinks she’s cute just ‘cause that synthetic mop of
hers blows in the wind. She looks like a fool and you look like an even bigger
fool when you wear her.53

LaWanda tells Janine to “get over” the past, the Black Power movement, and move on.
To have straight hair is to have class, quality, beauty, and ultimately desire. With being in
the middle of all of this The Woman “screams and pulls the two wigs off the wig stands
as the lights go to black on three bald heads.”54 The Woman chooses neither of them and
instead decides to have no hair at all. She is unable to decide, and unable to deal with the
two politics arguing before her. I have been in The Woman’s position of feeling caught
in between wanting to be natural and straight. The best option at the time would be to
surrender to it all—leaving you with the decision to choose nothing at all. With this
route, she could silence those conflicting voices.

**The Hair Parties of the Urban Bush Women**

Urban Bush Women (UBW) was birthed out of the creator, Jawole Willa Jo
Zillar’s, dream to have a dance company that reflected her concerns for social justice,
spiritual renewal, and the power that comes through connection to community.55 UBW
utilizes African dance and is inspired by “women’s experiences, African American

history, and the cultural influences of the African Diaspora.” An important mission of UBW is to develop “lasting community partnerships” in Brooklyn. In 2000, UBW went from a small office room in Manhattan to a larger performance space in Brooklyn. “The move was an important shift for the company, as it was the first time they [Urban Bush Women] had a home community.” With this new community, the UBW were able to create partnerships/relationships in Brooklyn, and could finally call a place home. With a home base, the UBW could include subject matter that was unique and relevant to the issues that are current in the community of Brooklyn, i.e. the effects of gentrification.

For Jawole, the topic of hair became a launching pad to talk about issues that were not only prevalent in the African American community in Brooklyn, but to people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Since hair has relevance to all people, the scope of the mission could extend to other cultures, races, and nationalities. In this way, diverse viewpoints, cultures, and misunderstandings (if any) could be put into dialogic conversations. One year later in 2000, the UBW began to host ten “HairParties” in both private/public spaces around Brooklyn. Each party engaged a particular group, for instance:

UBW held a men’s Hair Party at the Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center; a Hair Party for teenaged girls at the Children’s Aid Society, and one for seniors at the Fort Greene Senior Center. Other Hair Parties included mothers and daughters, employees of Chase and Fleet banks and members of the Fifth Avenue Committee, an active local group addressing issues of displacement and community development. Some Hair Parties were held at the homes of people in the Brooklyn community, which allowed for more intimacy. Whether small or large, each space brought with it both positives and negatives. With a smaller space, a level of intimacy was created which created more opportunities for dialogue to happen. However, the con of using a smaller

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space was that there were no opportunities to combine movement, which allows one to “be in touch with your authentic self and to understand things more viscerally.” 59

The original intention of the Hair Parties was to create text for UBW’s dance piece, “HairStories,” but Jawole “quickly discovered that the parties had the potential to go far beyond collecting and trying out material; they could also provide a creative framework for dialogue that transcended the HairStories performance.” 60 The dialogue that came out of the Hair Parties achieved Jawole’s goal of establishing community and allowed for the conversation surrounding hair to continue even after the parties. A dancer in the company reflected on one of the Hair Parties, stating that:

When it is time to leave, people seem to gather their coats and coordinate taxi rides home in larger, and more boisterous groups than the ones and twos that they arrived in. The bond between the guests, while still fragile, has been intensified. Some people won't see each other again. Some have plans for lunch dates. In any case, the Hair Party seemed a great way to spend an evening. The house feels heady with new ideas and connections. 61

These connections were created through the telling of stories, and then later performance of these stories. The women (and in some groups, men) could not only engage issues surrounding hair vocally but could embody and physicalize their experiences. During one Hair Party, a performance entitled, “Hot Comb Blues,” allowed the participations to physicalize, “the burn of a hot comb, the itch of a perm, and the yanking and tugging of a mother combing her daughter’s hair. The performance evoked visceral memories in hair party participants and inspired them to tell stories about their own “hair hell moments.” 62 This performance allowed for the women to discuss the lengths they go to achieve “good” hair and how such formations of “good”/”bad” aesthetic were created. 63

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The UBW were able to take the narratives of women’s “hair hell moments” and formulate the performance piece, “HairStories.” During the earlier edits, Nawole included a character called, Dr. Professor, who explained the history and necessary details of hair to the audience. In Beadabees, a similar character emerges as the character Mia. Mia is there as a bridge for my audience at Miami University, who is predominately White. I argue that in contrast to Nawole’s, Dr. Professor, Mia transcends serving as a reference, and is instead a representation of the generation that is coming up in the present hair revolution. Nawole felt that the character Dr. Professor was no longer needed and that she was a “purely didactic character.” Zillar noted that she wanted her audience and participants to draw their own conclusions.64

UBW’s Hair Parties are a model of how “real, honest, and straight-up conversation” surrounding hair can happen through the usage of dance, performance, and the power of narrative.65 It is this model that provides me with the methodology to improve and further the dialogic conversations that are in Beadabees.

*Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Lynn Nottage’s 1998 play, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* is set in the 1950’s, Brooklyn. Lynn Nottage set out to write *Crumbs* in order to understand the time period. The story follows Ernestine Crump, her father Godfrey Crump, and her little sister Ermina Crump as they make their way from Pensacola, Florida to Brooklyn, New York. With the death of his wife, Godfrey finds a way to cope through a televangelist in New York. To get closer to him, Godfrey moves his family up north to start a new life. The play begins to discuss a girl’s coming of age under the direction of her father. As the play goes on, the family is interrupted by Lily Ann Green, the sister of Godfrey’s ex wife, Sandra. Lily brings with her ideals of communism, free thought, and a great deal of both physical and emotional baggage. All of which is in direct conflict with Godfrey’s conservative religious views. The emotional baggage Lily comes with is the pain of being seen as her town’s outcast, and the subject of both discrimination and racism.


Now as the family’s “woman’s voice in the house,” Lily takes the two young girls under her wings and begins to share with them her experiences. These experiences are shared in the kitchen while Lily hot combs the girl’s hair. The kitchen becomes the site where the “revolution” begins to take flight and for the women to congregate to receive and provide hair care.”\textsuperscript{66} It also becomes the site where Ernestine and Ermina, listen to the stories of their Aunt Lily. Through these hair sessions, “black females learn important cultural ideals about womanhood and presentation of self.”\textsuperscript{67} We see this play out in scene 3 of the first Act.

Lily: Sit still, don’t fight me on this. Choose your battles carefully, chile a nappy head in this world might as well fly the white flag and surrender!

Ernestine: \textit{(To audience)} She’d talk constantly about “a revolution” from the kitchen. I’s always wondered when this revolution was going to begin and would I have to leave school to fight along her side.

Lily: We’re at war, babies. You don’t want to be walking around school with a scar across your forehead. You want people to think your hair’s naturally straight. That it flows in the wind.

Ernestine: How are they gonna think that?

Lily: Pass me the Dixie Peach. When I’m finished you’re gonna look just like a little Indian girl. \textit{(Ernestine reaches under the chair and passes Lily the jar of Dixie Peach. Lily rolls up her sleeves).}\textsuperscript{68}

To present yourself as a Black girl in the 50’s meant that your hair had to be free of kink. The kinkier your hair was the less likely you would be accepted in the dominant world. It was almost like signing away your pass in the world, or as Lily says in this scene, “flying the white flag and surrendering.” But to surrender in George Wolfe’s “Hair Piece” was to straighten ones hair and deny their black identity.

\textsuperscript{66} Lanita Jacobs-Huey, \textit{From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women’s Hair Care} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18.

\textsuperscript{67} Jacobs-Huey, \textit{From the Kitchen}, 18.

Chapter 2: Beadabees
Beadabees

By: Ashley Dunn

List of Characters:

Jessica- a woman in transition

O-lu-wa-sey(shay)-i Dada- a woman who is natural. Her name means “God made this curly hair” in Yoruba.

Layla- a woman who relaxes

Mia- she is Oluwaseyi’s young daughter

Sammi- a woman of mixed race with curly, fine hair

Young Jessica- played by Oluwaseyi

Mama- played by Layla, she is Jessica’s mother.

(The action takes place in a drugstore, similar to Walgreens, in the “Ethnic Hair Care” aisle. O-lu-wa-sey (shay)-i, a “naturalista” who believes in all things natural, along with her 8 year old daughter Mia, are present. Let’s just say they are regulars in this aisle).

Mia- “Nappy. N-a-p-p-y. Nappy. Or naps for short. Tightly coiled/curled unaltered hair. Or coiled hair in its natural state. It is found on people of African descent who do not chemically alter their hair texture. Better known as: Bad hair.” Mama, do I have nappy hair?

Oluwaseyi Dada: Yes, beautiful, strong, nappy hair. It’s what was given to you. You know what they say, “the nappier you are, the closer you are to God.”

Mia: Really? It doesn’t say that in my notebook mama.
**Oluwaseyi Dada:** Well that’s what I’m putting down. & get rid of “better known as Bad hair,” there’s no such thing. Does my hair look bad to you?

**Mia:** You always have it covered up, I don’t know.

**Oluwaseyi Dada:** Go on somewhere little girl. Someone is approaching. *(Jessica who is dressed in a hood approaches the aisle. She takes O-lu-wa-sey-i in, who is dressed in African clothing. She becomes hesitant for she knows that O-lu-wa-sey-i would disapprove with what she is about to do. O-lu-wa-sey-i looks at Jessica intently but pretends to be preoccupied with searching for a hair product. To divert O-lu-wa-sey-i’s attention, Jessica follows suit: she picks up a curl cream and pretends to read the label. O-lu-wa-sey-i is pleased. Jessica places the curl cream down and goes to grab a box of relaxer. Hate. (Jessica drops the box of relaxer to the ground).*

**Jessica:** Excuse me?

**Oluwaseyi:** Hmm? I didn’t say anything. *(Jessica reaches down to pick up the relaxer, and places it on the shelf. O-lu-wa-sey-i is satisfied and lets out a smile. Jessica then goes to pick up another product).*

**Jessica:** *(She reads)* “Beautiful Textures 3-step Straightening System. Temporarily straightens hair with just two products.” *(O-lu-wa-sey-i lets out a disapproving sigh. Jessica places the product back angrily. There is a moment. She then grabs the relaxer and tries to leave the aisle when....)*

**Oluwaseyi:** I really think you should re consider what you’re doing.

**Jessica:** I knew you were watching me! Look, I don’t have time for your guilt trip. It’s not your hair or your money so it shouldn’t concern you.

**Oluwaseyi:** It concerns my spirit to see my sistahs so lost.

**Jessica:** Lost? It really isn’t that deep lady. If you saw what I was working with underneath here you would see that I need this, believe me.
Oluwaseyi: Need it? Did your ancestors in Africa need it? Who told you, you needed this? I am sure there is nothing wrong with your hair now. *(Jessica removes her hood. Her hair is all over the place.)* It’s a lil’ out of place, but you’re working with something! You’re transitioning huh? *(Jessica nods her head)*

Mia: Transitioning: Or to transition. Transitioning refers to the process of going from relaxed hair to natural hair.

Oluwaseyi: Thank you sweetie. I’m sorry. She carries that notebook all around.

Jessica: No, it’s ok….. What’s your name?

Mia: Mia

Jessica: That’s pretty, I’m Jessica. You have some cool hair for a girl your age. I wish I was that brave to wear it out like that.

Mia: Why can’t you?

Jessica:…. Because people can be cruel….even the people you trust. You need to a lot of confidence to wear something like that.

Mia: You don’t have confidence? My mama taught me to have a lot of confidence. She says the “nappier you are, the closer you are to God.”

Jessica: Is that right?

Oluwaseyi: That’s enough Mia. Let the grown folks talk now.

Jessica: What’s with the notebook?

Oluwaseyi: She’s fascinated with watching hair tutorials on YouTube. She writes all of her information down in that notebook. If it’s about Black hair she knows it! She just sits in front of that computer for hours….watching. I rather it be something that is teaching her to love herself than that other mess on TV.

Jessica: That would have been nice to have growing up.

Oluwaseyi: Yeah it would have wouldn’t it? Are you alright?

Jessica: Yeah, I’m fine. Look, I’m going to go now. Thank you____?

Oluwaseyi: Oluwaseyi Dada
**Jessica:** Thank you *(struggles)* Oluwaseyi Dada. I appreciate what you’re trying to do but you’re not the one who has to walk around like this. I got to fix this mess *(points to her hair)*. Keep doing a good job with your kid. Bye Mia.

**Oluwaseyi:** I’m not letting you walk out of here with that relaxer Jessica.

**Jessica:** & why is that?

**Oluwaseyi:** My spirit knows things.

**Jessica:** Oh does it? Does it know that I received a warning yesterday on my job because my braids weren’t professional? It’s the only thing that makes my hair look decent & I can’t even wear them. I’ve tried everything to make this natural thing work & this is what I’m left with. So unless you have a better idea I’m leaving with this relaxer.

**Oluwaseyi:** It led me here today, right now at this very moment to tell you that you must fight the good fight. Don’t give in to self-hate and lose your pride over this mess. In a society dominated so much by white supremacy, wear your blackness with pride. That’s where your beauty and strength rest. *(She delivers her biggest blow and directs her attention to Mia).* You see this baby?

**Jessica:** Yes.

**Oluwaseyi:** She’s beautiful isn’t she?

**Jessica:** Yes

**Oluwaseyi:** What type of example are you if you’re not teaching her how to embrace her natural hair? Be the example for these young babies. They’re watching us. I was led here because-

**Layla**- She wasn’t led here. She just comes to this store Mondays thru Fridays for two hours straight until closing time guilt trippin’ innocent women like you out of relaxin’ their hair. *(To O-lu-wa-sey-i)* Hello Jennifer. I’m surprised you haven’t been kicked out yet. She tried to get me once and as you can see she wasn’t successful.

**Oluwaseyi:** My name is Oluwaseyi Dada, to you. It’s nice to see you too Layla.
Layla: You forget I knew you before this “pro African” thing. Believe it or not “Ms. Dada” was in here in every six weeks like me getting her creamy crack fix.

Mia: Creamy Crack: Another word for chemical relaxers. Also used interchangeably-and incorrectly- with the word “perm.” Black women use these straightening products that must be retouched every 6 to 8 weeks and become reliant on them like a crackhead is to crack.

Oluwayesì: Don’t you say that! Where did you get that from?

Mia: Urban Dictionary

Oluwayesì: No more of that you hear me?

Mia: Yes ma’am.

Layla: She’s gotten so big! How old are you now Mia?

Mia: My mama told me not to talk to people like you.

Layla: Did she? “Oluwayesì” tell me, what is a person like me?

Mia: She’s says only broken women straighten their hair.

Oluwayesì: That’s right. You hear that Jessica? This is who you could end up like.

Jessica: *(Looks at Layla and at the shelves)* Hold on, you’re the lady on the Olive Oil Relaxer kit?!

Layla: *(Flips hair)* Guilty. You can also find me on YouTube as “Layla the Diva.” It’s a hair and lifestyle channel.

Mia: It’s true she has over 200,000 subscribers.

Oluwaseyi: & you better not be one of them!

Mia: I only follow the natural bloggers like you told me to.
**Jessica:** This is great. Sorry if this is rude, but I have to ask, is that your real hair?

**Layla:** (*Whips her hair about her shoulders*) It’s all mine. (*these following words are shots to Oluwaysei*) All 18in of this-relaxed-fried-laid to the side- HAIR. I’ve been growing it out for a couple years now and relaxing it only once every four months. My whole regimen is on my channel. I go through the whole process step by step. & they say relaxed hair can’t grow.

**Jessica:** Really? Relaxed hair can grow that long? (*O-lu-wa-sey-i looks on with disgust*).

**Oluwaseyi:** Natural hair can grow even longer than that! Give her another year, it will all be gone.

**Layla:** Oh, is that why you wear a scarf all of the time? Because your hair just walked off and went? What a shame.

**Jessica:** My hair would just break off constantly, so I tried to go natural, and this is what I’m left with; two textures fighting against each other. Which one do you recommend? I was looking at this one, but I’ve heard some bad reviews on it.

**Layla:** Oh no, you don’t want that one. What’s your hair type? 4a, 4b, 4c?

**Jessica:** I have no clue what you’re asking me.

**Layla:** (*To Mia*) Can you help me out sweetie?

**Oluwaseyi:** Don’t solicit my baby for your brainwashing.

**Mia:** The hair typing system was created by Oprah Winfrey’s stylist, Andre Walker. It defines hair from 1a which is straight hair, to kinky 4c hair.

**Oluwaseyi:** MIA!
Layla: Thank you. Is your hair coily & make a “z pattern”?

Jessica: Yes!

Layla: Shrivels up like a dry sponge?

Jessica: Oh yes! My roots draw up straight to my head once water hits it.

Layla: Then you’re a 4c. I’d suggest using Dr. Miracles. Not too strong, but powerful enough to straighten the kinkiest of hair.

Oluwaseyi: Powerful enough to straighten your hair and take away your blackness with it! You’re about as white as your relaxer.

Layla: At least I can comb my hair. That is, if you had any hair.

Jessica: I think we should hear her out. I mean, her hair doesn’t lie.

Oluwaseyi: Hear her out? Do you know that studies have shown that the chemicals in relaxers can increase Black women’s risks of having certain illnesses and disorders? She doesn’t tell you that! By the looks of it, it’s already taken it’s effect on you Layla.

Sammi: (she enters) & do you know that going natural reduces the risk of you finding a mate by about 50%? Black women are already at the bottom of the list to get married now- a-days. Don’t make your situation worse. Stop pestering these women Jennifer.

Jessica: You definitely have a reputation around here.

Oluwaseyi: Why are you here Sammi?

Sammi: It’s a store isn’t it? People are supposed to buy some products here aren’t they? Out of all the times I’ve seen you in here, I have never seen you buy anything. I came to get me some curl cream.

Oluwaseyi: No, what I am asking is, what are you doing in this aisle?

Your section is to the left.

Sammi: & What section is that?

Oluwaseyi: The one with Pantene ProV, Garnier Fructis...don’t forget your other half.
Sammi: Never, you do a great job at reminding me. But for those who don’t know, my name is Sammi. My mother is white and my father is Black. There, it’s all out on the table.

Layla: She’s just bitter she couldn’t get them beadabees to slick back even if she tried. The stiffest gel in the world couldn’t slick those edges.

Mia: Beadabees: the tightly wound hair at the nape of the neck and along your hairline… Also known as pepper corns, peas, snap-back knots. Hair so nappy even that creamy crack won’t do.

Oluwaseyi: I think we’ve had enough of your commentary today, young lady.

Jessica: (To Sammi) How did you get your hair to curl up like that?

Sammi: Girl I just wet it with water and shingle some product into it.

Jessica: This product can do all of that? So if I follow your steps can my hair turn out like yours?

Oluwaseyi: If you follow the steps, your hair will turn out the way it is supposed to---like your own hair. You are filled with questions when the answer is right there in your roots!

Layla: She wasn’t talking to you Jennifer. Why must you always push your ideals on other people?

Oluwaseyi: My name is Oluwaseyi Dada. Wasn’t the name given to me by birth but it’s the name I chose for myself so I would like for you to use it.

My name is Oluwaseyi Dada. I spent most of my time living the life of someone else….I would like to be me for a change.

Before Oluwaseyi Dada, I was Jennifer, a composite of what people wanted me to be. When I stared in the mirror I couldn’t see myself anymore.
I saw my job- who upon hiring me, demanded that I cut my locks because it was against their dress code, so I relaxed it straight for them.

I saw my man- who thought maybe I was a little too big so I dropped pounds for him.

I saw my family- who thought I could look more presentable so I wore a suit for them.

& even in all that change; they still weren’t satisfied. What was wrong with the way I was naturally? I was made to hate me and I never hated me before I was told something was wrong.

But nothing was wrong with me.

Oluwaseyi Dada…God made this curly hair, this dark skin, this full frame, this crazy sense of style, and definitely this attitude.

I dare ya to call me Jennifer again. I don’t think you will like the outcome.

Jessica, Sammi & Layla: Alright Oluwaseyi Dada

Layla: As stubborn as I am, I will be the first to admit that I was wrong for my comments earlier. But you have to own up to what you have done too. Come on, “only broken women straighten their hair?” Really? That’s a bit harsh. & I get that from you on the daily. Just yesterday, she left a comment on my video telling me that because I relax my hair I hate myself. How’s that for creating community?! I thought we were better than that.

Oluwaseyi: The relaxer was created to destroy our kinks and for Black people to fit into an aesthetic that was not ours. I just call it like I see it.

Layla: Let me debunk some things for you. I relax my hair because I want to. There isn’t a kink in sight but that doesn’t mean I don’t love myself.
I relax my hair because I don’t have time to be spending 2 ½ hours detangling my hair.

Jessica: AMEN!  
Sammi: YASSSSS! Say that.

Layla: Isn’t my time important?

Jessica: Mmhhmm  
Sammi: You got things to do!

& for the last time please stop saying that because I wear my hair straight I am trying to emulate the white women I see on TV. They cute & all but I look GOOODDD!

& I can still look just as good when I channel my inner Angela Davis with my “fro.” My fro is for those days I really want to make a statement.

Say it loud!

All: I’m Black and I’m proud!

Layla: Say it loud!

All: I’m Black and I’m proud!

I look just as good when I channel my Susan L. Taylor on the cover of Essence. I’ve been known to turn a couple of heads with braids that goes straight to my behind.

& I’ve had my moments where I shaved it all off like India Arie. It felt good to sing:

All: “I am not my hair”

I am not this skin

I am not your expectations, no.

& felt so beautiful seeing all of my facial features with no hair to hide behind it.
When I’m feeling a little experimental, I’m no stranger to the weave. I like the versatility!

Black hair is like clay and I’ve molded it to my liking. It’s my expression & I’ll be damned if I let someone regulate it. I’ve never been a woman that would bend or shift for anyone. You of all people know that.

**Oluwaseyi:** Oooh don’t I know! You’re more stubborn than the kink on my head. Yes, I do have hair! I guess…I owe you an apology (*says it under her breath*) I’m sorry.

**Layla:** We didn’t get that, you’re what?

**Oluwaseyi:** I’m…s-s-s-s

**Layla:** & you say I’m stubborn.

**Oluwaseyi:** I’m sorry, ok.

**Sammi:** (*Clears her throat*)

**Oluwaseyi:** You need a cough drop or something?

**Sammi:** No, while you’re at it I need an apology too!

**Oluwaseyi:** I’m sorry that you don’t fully understand how it feels and what it means to be nappy when you’re the status quo. I’m sorry that in the midst of celebrating Black hair in this natural movement, we still find a way to measure ourselves against something else. You. I’m sorry that you’re the new face natural hair companies are reaching out to for representation. I’m sorry that viewers on YouTube, like my daughter, are looking to women with your hair texture, a looser more defined curl, far more than a woman with kinkier hair. I’m sorry, it must be hard.

**Sammi:** I can’t pretend that I know the struggles of being nappy. I don’t! But it shouldn’t detract from my own journey. I’m in between nappy and straight.
Not straight enough to be white, and not kinky enough to be Black.

But, I’m somewhere in the middle.

When you’re in the middle people don’t know where to place you. They try to fit you neatly in a box…when it doesn’t fit…. I don’t fit.

Do you know how it feels to not belong anywhere?

To have to prove your legitimacy everyday?

When black people see me, they see mixed. She’s somewhere in between.

You see, I can wear an Afro and raise my fists. My skin has melanin just like yours. I fit!

But, I’m somewhere in the middle.

Just as much as I am Black, I am white.

When white people see me, they see Black.

But I like bluegrass! & I can belt out the lyrics to so many country music songs. I fit!

But, I’m somewhere in the middle.

This multiple consciousness can be too much to handle—a woman that’s in between.

Not quite nappy and not too straight.

Why do I have to choose when I feel the pressure of embracing all of me?

All of this natural hair, this skin, and the complexity of this multiple consciousness. It’s me…somewhere in the middle, between nappy and straight.

& it’s a good place to be.

Oluwaseyi: (Sincerely) I’m sorry.

Sammi: It’s all good girl! You ladies have me carrying on, I came in here for some curl cream. Turn a 5 min trip to the store to a 1hr. (Looks at the shelf) You want to know something though? As much as these new products are popping up on the market tell me why I still can’t find something that really works for this hair? It’s a shame.

Oluwaseyi: I have a curl cream that would be perfect for your hair.

Sammi: Really? What’s the brand?
Oluwaseyi: I made it!

Sammi: Ah the kitchen beautician.

Oluwaseyi: You know you have to make your own now a days because depending upon where you are it’s hard to get some variety.

Layla: You’re right. Don’t you hate having to travel miles to get a product you like because the “ethnic hair care” section is about 1/18 of shelf space? We care about our hair too!

Oluwaseyi: Or if the store does have products for our hair it’s only about two bottles of it left on the shelves. Restock please.

Jessica: Now, I’m going to keep it real… Can I do that?

Oluwaseyi: Speak your piece.

Jessica: I can’t stand the hate I receive from other African American women. No shade, but we can be our own worse enemies.

Layla: *cough Oluwaseyi *cough

Oluwaseyi: I only want the best for me, my daughter, and my sistahs.

Sammi: I hate having to explain my hair and why I do what I do, or why my hair is the way it is.

Mia: I hate wash days!

Jessica: Yes, wash days are a pain. Oluwaseyi: A pain and a half

Sammi: Ladies, I have a confession. I am….. a product junkie…. I hate having to try out so many products for my hair just for it to sit in my closet or cabinet.

Layla: I hate when people ask, “can I touch your hair?”

All: NO!
Layla: I am not a museum artifact.

Oluwaseyi: I hate that our Black men are made to believe that our natural hair is unnatural. It just doesn’t make sense!

Layla: Or that they leave us for our hair. Do you remember Tyrone?

Oluwaseyi: How could I forget about that sorry excuse for a man. I ran into him the other day, the brotha is still walking around afraid from what you said to him.

Sammi: Who is Tyrone?

Layla: Tyrone was an old boyfriend of mine who lost his mind when I told him I was cutting my hair to go natural.

Sammi: You know they get a complex about our hair.

Layla: Oh he was all bent out of shape. Listen up Mia, this is an example of a man to stay away from. I have to admit I did surprise him with my new do—You know me, I was feeling a bit risky that day and wanted to cut off my hair. & he didn’t know how to take it. When he saw it, he said, “as a man………. I don’t know. (Pause) I don’t feel like a man with your hair like that. It’s about the same length as mine. Baby I loved your hair how it was.”

Oluwaseyi: Then he had the nerve to say, “Well baby, natural ain’t for everyone.”

Layla: This man literally had the nerve to give me an ultimatum. I told him that he only proved to me that a woman like me was far above what he could handle and that he should take his opinion & shove it right up his---

Oluwaseyi: Language Layla, my kid.

Layla: That he should take his opinion…. and send it out to sea.

Oluwaseyi: Better

Layla: Because I didn’t care!

Sammi: I hate wearing a scarf to bed. It messes up the mood.

Oluwaseyi: I hate having to plan my hairstyle because of the weather. Some days there are times when I want to wear my hair straight and—

Layla: Hold on did you say straight?

Sammi: Yeah did the natural diva say straight?

Oluwaseyi: I dibble and dabble in it sometime.

Layla: I hate sitting through all those hours of getting your hair braided.

Sammi: Oh yes that’s the worst. I hate..sore wrists..

Oluwaseyi: & arms..

Sammi:… For those long hours you have to hold them up to do your hair.

Jessica: I hate that when growing up, I didn’t have the knowledge about my hair as we do now.

Oluwaseyi: True

Jessica: I hate that I have no clue how to style the hair that was given to me.

I hate that the people who are supposed to love you the most are the ones to hurt you.

I hate how I don’t feel beautiful in my natural state.

I hate how mean my mom was on those Sunday afternoons in her kitchen.

I hate how my mother turned doing my hair into a showdown between my naps and her comb. Her comb always won.

She would say:

“Keep your head straight!”

“Why you got to be so tenderheaded?”

Or, “put your hands in your head one more time!”

I just wished that on one of those Sundays my hair would loosen up. That way maybe she wouldn’t have to go through all the trouble of styling it.

I hated how she would say:
**Mama (Layla):** You’ve been playing in your hair?

**Jessica:** & I would say:

**Young Jessica (Oluwaseyi):** No ma’am.

**Jessica:** I lied. I didn’t like my hair in those braids she gave me to prep my hair to be straightened. I would always take them out and re-braid them.

**Mama:** Then why are there knots in it? I didn’t go through all the trouble of detangling your hair last night for it to look a mess today. I don’t have time for this.

**Jessica:** I always felt so bad for wasting her time. I can tell by the tugs and pulls that doing my hair was my mother’s least favorite part of her day. It was a joint punishment for us both.

**Mama:** I don’t know where you get this hair from. It ain’t from me. Probably from your daddy.

**Jessica:** As if he’s to blame for my ugliness. When she tugs and tugs at my hair I can’t help but think, “is my hair so horrible that I have to go through this pain?” With every passing of the hot comb, every groan, every curse word that slipped through my mother’s lip, every bead of sweat from the 2hr hair sessions, every slap on the arm or face for not sitting up straight, and with every single burn I fall more in hate with myself (beat)…….. But my baby sister doesn’t have to experience that. She gets loving caresses and sweet words.

**Mama:** Look at all this pretty hair! It’s so soft like a baby’s.

**Jessica:** She gets a gentle smile and the ease of the comb slipping through her hair. Something so simple, but it means so much.

She has good hair…

hair that is easy to comb…..

hair that doesn’t take too much of mama’s time…..

Hair that is a joy for mama to do….
Its a nice break from the grueling task of dealing with mine. She knows she’s beautiful; not just because of the words mama says but because of mama’s caring hands.

A soft touch.

Only gentle tugs and hands smoothing down her strands.

Why couldn’t I have hair like hers? Why couldn’t she love me like her?

All I needed was a gentle touch.

I can only hope that won’t be the same for my future daughter.

I pray that our Black girls can grow up loving themselves.

**All: Ashe**

**Jessica:** I pray for kind words and caring hands.

**All: Ashe**

**Jessica:** I pray for a community that will hold them up and not tear them down.

**All: Ashe**

**Jessica:** I pray most of all that they have the confidence to live and express themselves as they see fit.

**All: Ashe**

**Jessica:** I can relate so well to you Oluwaseyi and how you struggled to see yourself in the mirror. It’s what I’ve been struggling with for so long but I couldn’t put into words. I wish I had the confidence like you and the rest of you all. You’re so strong.

**Sammi:** You have it too. The fact that you shared shows that; you’re just on that journey of finding it yourself. In the meantime though, let’s help you out with this hair girl.

**Jessica:** I told you I have no clue about what I’m doing.

**Oluwaseyi:** Oh, it shows.

**Jessica:** You said it was a little out of place.

**Oluwaseyi:** I was trying to be positive. Mia, hand me that set of hair ties. *(O-lu-wa-sey-i pulls her hair into a ponytail)*. There.

**Layla:** Look at that face girl!
**Mia:** One last thing. (*she takes the bow from her hair and puts it in
Jessica’s hair. Mia then grabs a mirror from the shelf*). Now who do you see?

**Jessica:** Me.

**Mia:** (*She says the following “ashe” in agreement with Jessica. The bridge
between Jessica’s generation and the present is connected with this final
affirmation.*) Ashe

(*Lights out*)

END
Conclusion

I think how I feel about my hair…it’s more than just hair now…It’s about how I see myself, not good enough, must be changed, by someone else, like they want me…I don’t know] just the thought of getting it hot combed made my skin crawl. Like the thought of my mother touching my hair makes me cry. I’m trying to understand why…I want to deal with this so that I love my daughter right.

-Jaime Coaker, performer in Beadabees

Beadabees is the result of the intertextuality of the works, words, and narratives of Black female scholars/artists mentioned in this thesis. Ayana Bryd’s and Lori Tharps’ Hair Story provided the ground on which Oluwaseyi Dada stands. Bryd and Tharps uncovers the meaning of hair for Africans before enslavement and gives a chronological account of the story of Black hair. They also write about the significance hair had (and currently has) in the shaping of the identity, culture, and self-expression of African American people in the United States. Oluwaseyi Dada, which means “God made this curly hair,” is influenced by Noliwe Rooks’ hair narrative in her book, Hair Raising. Rooks’ family instilled in her Black pride and encouraged her to wear her hair as close to natural as possible. “You know they say, the nappier you are, the closer you are to God.” Oluwaseyi represents the Black voices in the 60s and 70s. She represents Booker T. Washington, Angela Davis, Gloria Wade-Gayles, and Marcus Garvey who were all against the straightening of one’s “kinks.” She is Jessica’s African conscious, and asks her the question, “who told you, you needed this relaxer?” If your ancestors in Africa didn’t need it, why should you?

Beadabees is also influenced by YouTube, which has become a way of archiving Black hair narratives and tutorials throughout the diaspora. From its creation (2005) to present, YouTube has emerged as a “how to” guide for many people, and that is definitely

69 Jaime Coaker, text message to Ashley Dunn, May 20, 2015.

no exception in regards to Black hair styling. After years of relaxing, Black women are abandoning their relaxers in large numbers. Mintel, a marketing agency, reports that:

The relaxer segment will reach $152 million this year, down from $206 million in 2008. Furthermore, in the past 12 months, nearly three-fourths (70%) of Black women say they currently wear or have worn their hair natural (no relaxer or perm), more than half (53%) have worn braids, and four out of 10 (41%) have worn locks.71

Natural hair products that are catered toward natural styles are taking the place of relaxers on the shelves at stores. With the abandonment of relaxers, Black women must un-learn the hair regimens that nourished their hair while it was relaxed and adopt regimens that mirrors very closely to those used in Africa. To go natural, is to return back to Black hair pre enslavement—it is a return to African roots. To re-learn how to do their hair, Black women have gone to YouTube for guidance. Black hair gurus or “naturalistas,” who are the instructors of natural hair tutorials, have documented their trials and errors concerning their hair through video. In this way, viewers learn how to do their own hair through the experiences of others. A popular hair guru with one of the largest natural hair following is, “Naptural85,” whose real name is Whitney. She began her YouTube channel five years ago in 2010, and opened with a video entitled, “My Natural Hair Journey!” which documents her journey from relaxed hair to natural. Her “simple, natural, hair care” tutorials have garnered Whitney over 600,000 subscribers. Currently, Whitney has published 207 videos on her main channel, and has two other channels that are “vlogs” (video blogging) about her daily life with her husband and daughter. Her videos consist of tutorials that teach the viewers how to do two strand twists, various updos, her hair washing routine, and how to create your own natural stylers and moisturizers. Naptural85’s channel has opened the door for thousands of hair “bloggers” to archive their own hair stories and at times hair nightmares to be dispersed throughout the diaspora. Whether it is a woman of African descent that is serving in the army in the Middle East, or studying abroad in Korea, or a scientist in the UK—the torch continues to pass on, one vlog or tutorial at a time.

When discussing the current natural hair movement, it is important to talk about the decision some Black women make to continue to straighten their hair. Regardless of the harmful effects of relaxers and the history attached to it, Black women are still choosing to do what they please and expressing themselves regardless if their mate likes it or not (or if they shake a few feathers within the natural hair community). There is a movement away from the binary of natural vs. straight and to the multiple ways Black women choose to express themselves.

As mentioned earlier in my literature review, my own opinion towards women who straightens their hair drastically changed when I read Pamela Johnson and Juliette Harris’ Tenderheaded. Their book gave voice to many different Black hair narratives. It was through this text that I became inspired to create the antithesis to Oluwaseyi--Layla. I wanted to place the two onstage to illustrate the tension I see on YouTube and also the tension that has carried over from the 60’s and 70’s. In a sense I see Oluwaseyi and Layla as the two battling wigs in George C. Wolfe’s The Colored Museum. Set in their ways and ideals, they place Jessica in the middle of their disagreements. In The Colored Museum, The Woman was placed in the middle of a debate between Janine and LaWanda. The Woman had to make the decision to pick which wig to wear on her “breakup date.” At the end of the vignette, she made the decision not to wear either one of them by taking them both off of their stands. I wanted to provide a resolution with Oluwaseyi and Layla that I didn’t see in The Colored Museum, and allowed them to not only voice their opinion vocally but also to come to a middle ground of understanding. As the women discuss the annoyances of their hair, failed love, and the lack of resources for their hair, they connect to each other. The play ends with Jessica’s confession and the women joining together to stand in agreement with Jessica as she blesses future generations, and frees herself.

Like Nia, in da Kink in my Hair, Jessica’s mother hated her blackness, and showed favor to her baby sister who had looser hair. For much of Jessica’s life she lived to please her mother by relaxing her hair. She has also lived to please other people and decided to go natural, as many other Black women have done recently. Jessica represents a woman who is in transition, as she is left with the challenge of working with her new
texture for the first time. When she resorted to wearing braids to maintain her hair, her job gave her a warning. This warning, prompted her to go to the convenience store to get a relaxer. Jessica, who is in between being not all the way natural or straight, is conflicted with what to do with her hair and cannot see herself when she looks into the mirror. As Ntozake Shange says, (she is very much on the journey of) working towards the end of her own rainbow. Like Nia, Jessica is also on her own ontological journey to heal from her relationship with her mother. I wanted to tell this narrative in Beadabees because it is an issue that I still see haunting the African American community today.

Black society is definitely not as it was in the early 1900’s. Now more than ever because of the natural hair movement that is occurring, it is not uncommon to see hair interweaved in popular culture. India Arie’s 2006 hit, “I am not my hair,” provided its listeners with Arie’s own hair story and how she came to the point where she didn’t let her hair define her. This song has been the inspiration and “cover song” to many natural/chemically altered hair gurus all across YouTube. “I am not my hair” represents Black women’s severed ties with societies expectations.

In 2010, Sesame Street produced and aired the song, “I love my hair,” that featured a Black girl as a puppet as she sung about the many styles her hair can achieve. The young girl talks about how she enjoys her hair whether it is in cornrows, or in an Afro. Through this episode, young Black girls are taught to love their hair in it’s many forms and to celebrate its versatility.

Written from a father’s perspective, Chris Rock’s 2009 documentary, Good Hair, explains some of the processes, styles, and politics of Black hair. Rock created his film after his three-year old daughter asked him, “Daddy, how come I don’t have good hair?” That same year, Tyra Banks, an African American supermodel, was inspired by Rock’s film and asked her viewers the touchy question of “what is good hair;” on her widely popular talk show. For that particular episode, Tyra ditched her lace front wig and wore her hair in cornrows. She addressed the audience and said:

I’m sitting here a little differently right now. My hair is in cornrows because I’m about to let you in on a controversial subject that not a lot of people know about.
It’s a show that I wanted to do for a long time, in fact, ever since we started the Tyra show.\footnote{Tyra Banks, “What is Good Hair?” (Handprint Entertainment: Warner Bros. Television Distribution, 2009), Episode 149.}

By ditching her wig, which was often times straight, and wearing braids, Tyra connects back to her roots. In order to talk about what’s good and bad hair, Banks felt the need to let go of her wig--a wig that fit into the European, “good hair” aesthetic. The show invited Black women and their daughters to discuss how negative beauty formations start young in girls. When Tyra asked a Black girl about why she chose to wear her Hannah Montana wig (a long and blond wig), the young girl replied that “she feels pretty” with it on.

The discussion of Black hair is not just limited to the big screen and stage but is also being discussed on a local scale. Hair is being discussed across universities at “hair conventions,” and panels such as “The Politics of Black Women’s Hair Symposium,” at the University of Pennsylvania. It is being discussed by local artists such as Chaunesti Webb, an interdisciplinary theater artist from Durham, NC through her works *I Love My Hair When It’s Good: & Then Again When It Looks Defiant and Impressive*, and *I Love My Hair: The Remix*. Black hair is truly a topic that has extended its reach and is not just limited to the barbershops and kitchens as it use to be.

With the creative and written scholarship that has come out recently, what is left to talk about hair? Our ghosts still unfortunately linger. I immediately think of Beyoncé and Jay-Z’s three-year old daughter, Blue Ivy Carter. When Blue Ivy was shown in public sporting a kinky Afro, the Black female community erupted. Women could not fathom how someone with as much money as Beyoncé, would allow her daughter’s hair to be in that state. People who objected to Blue Ivy’s hair waited anxiously for pictures to surface with Blue’s hair combed. Pictures from Beyoncé’s mom’s wedding came out earlier this year, which showed Blue Ivy with two ponytails in her head. To Blue Ivy’s critics delight, her hair was combed and brushed. In one particular photo, Blue Ivy could be seen beside her cousin, Julez, who has a lighter complexion, hair, and eyes. A Black woman on Facebook left a comment underneath the photo that reads:
“That boy is cute[.] she’s ok she look like dad[.] they finally combed her hair.”

Jay-Z has full lips, dark skin, and a broad nose, which are qualities for which the media has ridiculed him. While Beyoncé, who has lighter skin, a thinner nose, and thinner lips than her husband is considered one of the most beautiful women in the world. When Beyoncé and Jay-Z announced their pregnancy with Blue Ivy, the public hoped that Blue would take after her mother. The focus is not just on Blue Ivy’s hair being combed but also on her facial features being aesthetically Black like her father’s.

It saddens me to see that this young girl has to face such criticism on a public scale. (On an aside—North West, Kim Kardashian and Kanye West’s daughter, can wear the same hairstyle with her hair out and there is no critique). It sickens me to know that our young Black girls have to endure such mistreatment from those they are supposed to look up to. Our work is not done.

I created Beadabees to create a space for Black women to dialogue about what is occurring in the natural hair movement and what we need to work on within the realm of sisterhood. But, I also wanted for Black women to not only heal each other but to also prepare the ground for future generations. The power of theatre is that it allows its viewers to look at the issues, joys, triumphs, and shortcomings of our society. I did not want to hold back on my critique of the shortcomings of the Black female community. While I believe that Oluwaseyi’s intentions and position hold value, I do find her to be oppressive to both Jessica and Layla.

I staged two mother-daughter relationships onstage; Oluwaseyi and Mia as well as Jessica and her mother. Like Nia in the da Kink in my Hair, Jessica’s relationship with her mother harmed her negatively. Jessica is scarred from the trauma she endured with her mother as she got her hair hot combed as a child. This contrasts with hooks’ experience with the hot comb as a youth. For hooks, it created a space for women to bond with each other. For Jessica, it was a space where her esteem and outlook on herself was damaged by the words, and actions used during her hair sessions.

I placed Mia, Oluwaseyi’s eight-year old daughter who wears her hair in a cropped haircut, in the play because I wanted to contrast Jessica’s relationship to Mia’s
relationship with Oluwaseyi. Mia has the privilege of growing up in a time where there are resources and information concerning her hair that Jessica did not have. At eight years old, she has a sense of identity and esteem that Jessica is on the journey of finding. Mia, is also the name of my one-year old niece, and is a representation of how positive beauty formations can influence a young girl’s sense of self and confidence. Her mother, Oluwaseyi, like Noliwe Rooks’ instilled in her Black pride, and would not for a second allow her to believe that her hair was bad. When Mia asked her mother whether her hair was nappy, Oluwaseyi replied:

Yes, beautiful, strong, nappy hair. It’s what was given to you. You know what they say, the “nappier you are, the closer you are to God.” & get rid of “better known as Bad hair,” there’s no such thing. Does my hair look bad to you?  

Oluwaseyi did not like what Mia had written down in her notebook, which was information she gathered from the Internet, and told her to erase that particular statement. Oluwaseyi becomes the author of the information that Mia receives and shields her away from the public’s perception and ideology.

**My Hair Story**

In my research for this thesis, I realized that Black female scholars embedded their own works with their personal hair story. I therefore could not leave out my own story in this project. Embedded in *Beadabees*, is my own relationship with my hair.

*As someone who was home schooled from kindergarten to the 4th grade I didn’t have the ideologies of the outside world to influence me. With a house full of women, my father made the decision for my sisters and I to start locks. He thought that our hair was more manageable in that way and also cost efficient.*

*I didn’t grow up knowing that my hair was nappy, or even what the concept of “natural” was. My hair just happened to be in dreadlocks. I had the pleasure of watching my mom go through many styles of having artificial silk locks, growing her*

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73 Dunn, *Beadabees*, 38
own, the press and curl, a short cropped fro, her hair shaved bald, and finally her relaxed styles. I never heard my father tell my mother how she should look because he accepted her in many forms.

All of that changed when my parents divorced and I went to an all Black public school in the inner city of Cincinnati. My mother could no longer home school my sisters and I because she had to start working to support us. Upon entering the school, I received numerous questions from my straight haired peers about my locks. “Are you from Jamaica?” they would ask. I knew quickly that I was different, and at the age of nine, being different was not ideal. I was constantly picked on and longed to fit in with the other girls, so I asked my mom if I could get a relaxer. She allowed me to get one. I felt so happy to be able to pull off the styles I saw my peers do.

I kept my relaxer through high school and started experimenting with dyeing my hair. I didn’t realize that the peroxide in hair dye along with the sodium hydroxide in the relaxer were a dangerous combination. My hair thinned. No matter how much I conditioned my hair, I could not get it to look lustrous. So, I resorted to wearing micro braids to give my hair a break. Before I knew it, I was all the way natural. My hair was thick and healthy. For the first time it maintained its moisture and felt so good. With the new knowledge I acquired in working with my natural hair, I decided to give the relaxers another shot. It didn’t last long though. The first five months was good but then my hair started to thin again, placing me back at square one. I began the journey of growing my hair out natural again, but this time, I decided to install a “sew in,” which are hair extensions. Those extensions gave me the freedom to wear my hair straight, and not have to bother with my real hair. It took about a year of extensions for me to realize the damage it was causing my hair. It thinned for the third time. Looking in the mirror at my natural hair, I felt I had two choices; relax my hair again, or go back to my trusty braids. I wanted to do neither and felt like I had no option.

For some reason I felt led to go on YouTube and search natural hairstyles. I had no clue how to work with my own natural texture because when it was natural my mom styled it. I remember watching a video of a woman who goes by the name of “SimplYounique” and how she explained her “wash and go” process. I went to another YouTube channel,
“Naptural85” and saw her hair regimen. Each one of these women had hair that was soft, silky, and had a distinct 4a, 4b curl pattern. It was the type of hair that you would call “good hair.” I came under the assumption that my hair could look like theirs and that all I needed was the product. When I went out to store to buy the Ecostyler gel and the ample amount of conditioner, I was dismayed that my hair wasn’t as “pretty” as theirs. I tried my first year of being natural to emulate the curl pattern that was not my own.

Going natural was something that felt so freeing to me and yet I still found a way to measure myself up against something. I hated my hair the way it was and wished that my hair could be looser and silkier like the women I saw on YouTube, or like Sammi in my piece Beadabees. I guess that is my own “Pecola truth.” I wanted to be natural but I wanted the 3c and 4a curls that were worshiped on YouTube. It wasn’t about getting my hair as straight as possible anymore, but it was a constant search for the “perfect curl.” A curl that was not my own.

The “Final” Chapter

After the reading of Beadabees on May 9th, a friend of mine who is a natural, African American woman, walked up to me and told me that every topic I hit on in the piece was something she had to deal with earlier in that week. She mentioned that while this piece could reach women of diverse cultures, Beadabees was needed for the Black female community. When discussing feminism we reflected on patriarchy and white supremacy-- powers that continually need to be critiqued. Often within feminism it is important to turn inward and begin to work on the strained relationships within the realm of sisterhood. How much more could we progress as a community if women did not tear each other down?

For future drafts, I hope to create a script that is more fluid and allows opportunities for the insertion of personal narratives. I learned throughout this process, that narrative and hair can not be separated because it is so tied up with the identities of African American women. I wanted to include the voices of my actors so I asked them two questions. These questions were, “what is your hair story?” and “what does being
natural mean to you?” I included parts of their testimonies within the monologues of their characters to allow them to enter themselves into the piece. In this way, “performance makes visible and tangible that which is often overlooked by history and creates a space where we can collectively labor to re-member unarchived or unarchivable histories.”

“The actors and I created the “I hate” portion of the piece—as we gave our list of annoyances one by one. I called this particular section our chance to “riff” off of each other. An actor would say their pet peeve about hair and the others would comment on the statement by either agreeing with it or going off in a tangent. This riffing allowed us to establish a sense of community and genuine interaction with one another. I would like to flesh out the script a bit more to create more opportunities like that to happen.

The last and final thing my friend mentioned to me after the reading, was how she overheard our friend’s ten-year old daughter Zoe, talk about how she could relate to Beadabees so well. This play, and theatre in general, could be a great way to get young Black girls talking about their hair and experiences with it. As I reflect on the future of Black Hair politics, I am excited for our generation of young women. To see the care my sister puts into my niece’s hair, and how at an early age she is establishing positive beauty formations. I can only pray, as Jessica states at the end of her monologue, that the young Black girls that are coming after me will grow up loving and expressing themselves as they see fit. I will not be the one to stand in their way.

Ashe

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74 Nicole Gurgel, “Radical Possibilities: Anti-Racist Performance/Practice in 900 Gallons.” (MA thesis., The University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 34.
References


