

Meet my hair – a multifaceted personality

My hair is beautiful.

That statement is not the beginning of a column expressing an outpouring of black pride, but rather a simple fact stated by a confident woman with a self-esteem booster shot.

As soon as I heard about the documentary “Good Hair,” directed by comedian Chris Rock, I knew I would write a column about my hair. Long before the movie began opening doors for discussions on black women’s hair among all genders and ethnicities, my hair was being touched, admired and questioned.

I wear a new look almost every week. I have three wigs — I named them Naomi, Beyoncé and Anchor Woman — and I’m not afraid to wear all of them

within the same week and end the week with my own nonsymmetrical, happily nappy, non-circular fro that goes down my neck and blows in the wind. I’ve been seen working every style from cornrows to a long golden weave. I’ve taken my own hair almost to the same color as the weave, and I have affectionately been dubbed

Angela Davis, Rage and Mary J.

Blige all within a timespan of two weeks.

The weave was a

convenient way to help me get over a haircut I didn’t like and to experiment with color. The wigs help me when I’m lazy or determined to be punctual. The rest I do because I like variety and because I can.

That’s it. I get bored easily, and my hair with its four different textures — a fluffy, malleable cotton at the top, wavy on the sides, soft but extra-tight and kinky in the middle and somewhere between the texture of the sides and top in the back — helps me to stave off the boredom.

When I stopped adding chemical straighteners to my hair eight years ago, it was partly to make a statement of cultural pride. But since then I’ve considered getting a relaxer. At various moments, I have missed the sculpted updos that hair straightened with heavy heat can’t replicate, due to the sculpted styles’ reliance on water-based sprays and gels. Once hair is straightened with heat, contact with moisture — Ohio Valley humidity,

sweat, shower water — makes it curl.

At other times, I’ve wanted a straight style to endure for an upcoming event or I’ve loathed the four hours it currently takes me to twist my natural naps, and that’s not even counting the time it takes to properly wash and deep condition them. I’ve never gone back to a relaxer because I like options and because I’ve never found a hairstylist willing to put one in my head.

Currently my favorite style is the one shown in the headshot that accompanies this column. It’s fun and flattering, it removes some of the years from my look that straightening my hair adds while adding some of the years that afro puffs take away, and unlike when I wear my hair in two-stranded twists resembling locks (incorrectly termed “dreads”), it doesn’t somehow indicate to men that I’m a good bet for freaky sex on the floor of an incense-filled loft.

The personality traits that others

impose on me depending on my hairstyle remind me of a punishment a boy in my eighth-grade algebra class received. Ear- or neck-length hair with bangs swept away from the face was the trend among popular white boys then. When this child got into some trouble, his parents made him cut his hair because, they explained, “It affects the way you think.”

For me, the way I think affects my hair, but not in the ways onlookers believe. I don’t twist my hair when I’m horny, just as I don’t pin Naomi to my head when I have the sudden urge to throw a cell phone at someone. When I wake up feeling as if I don’t want to leave my apartment, I tie a scarf around my head. When I think I’m sexy and fabulous, my hair is beautiful, no matter which style I choose. ♣

Mariam Williams is a Louisville native who writes about the random thoughts that hold her attention for two minutes or more.



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