UNIQUE AFRICAN HAIR

Hello African:

Have you ever stopped for a while to think about and appreciate your hair??

Well, I bet not, partly because we have been feeding our minds with the wrong idea that our differences are weaknesses.

Throughout my hairdressing career, I came across many clients who would ask me” Why do we have to be black and have shorter hair at the same time?”

I grew up admiring the Asian hair – the long dense hair- I thought their hair was the best and probably one that every woman is supposed to aspire for.

So just like any other African woman, I saw my short 4c hair as a weakness and not something to be appreciated.

Did I just say 4c hair?? Yeah, you heard me right. All hairs can be classified into general types based on texture, density, porosity, and many more yet to be discovered.

Which you say?

Listen,

**General Classification of Hair.**

Cosmetologists, hair stylists, and researchers have contributed to the development of standardized systems for classifying hair types, which are used for educational purposes, product development, and personalized hair care recommendations.

The classifications of hair types have developed over time through a combination of cultural practices, scientific research, and professional expertise within the beauty and hair care industries.

It is very important to understand your hair type and its characteristics so as to tailor your hair care routines accordingly and choose your products wisely.

**Classification based on Texture.**

There are four general classes agreed upon by hair professionals popularly known as the “Andre Walker Hair Typing System”

Just like the name suggests it was popularized by a famous hairstylist Andre Walker.

To know where your hair falls, wash it, let it dry then come back to this article and find the characteristics that match your hair state.

In this classification, the four classes are straight, wavy, curly, and coily/kinky in that order.

1. **Straight**

All straight hairs you see fall into this category. But also, the hairs might be straight and quite different hence sub-classes.

Which are:

1. a Straight, fine, and thin

1. b Straight, Medium-textured

1. c Straight, Course

This type of hair is most prevalent in the East- Asian populace and their descent.

These include countries such as China, Japan, some population in India, and North and South Korea, although don’t be surprised to find such hair in other areas too.

1. **Wavy**

All people with wavy hair say Hi, your hair falls into this category.

Talk of the beach waves, spiral waves, etc.

Just like the above type this one also has sub-classes:

2. a Wavy, fine, and thin

2. b Wavy, Medium-textured

2. c Wavy, Course

This type of hair tends to be more prevalent among European-descent populations and some Indian and Arabic populations.

Northern European countries like the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, and Ireland.

1. **Curly**

You wash your hair and it rolls into curls, this is your hair category.

This hair in its natural state looks like it has been worked on by a curling iron or something in the same line.

Wondering if it has subcategories, yes it has.

3. a Curly – Loose curls

3. b Curly – Tight curls

3. c Curly – Corkscrew curls

This type is most prevalent in populations of African and Arabic descent.

1. **Coily/ Kinky**

Now, fellow Africans here we go,

I’m sure that after most of you washed your hair and dried it you didn’t find yourself in any of the above three categories, that’s because most African hairs fall in the type (4) class.

You washed your hair dried it and it went all the way down, there you go.

Let's dive deeper into the sub-classes of this type:

4. a Coily, tight curls with an “S” pattern

4. b Coily, tight curls with a “Z” pattern

4. c Coily, tightly coiled with minimum definition.

So where does your hair fall?

And finally, readers keep in mind that these are just generalizations of hair textures, while most hairs will fall into these categories, each individual tends to have their unique hair characteristics on further analysis at the basic level.

Just like we are all Africans, but from different countries, and in each Country, there are different tribes then individuals.

Even at the subcategory layer, each individual will have their unique hair characteristics and don’t also be surprised to find hair that has a combination of two or more subcategories.

Type 4 Hair

African hair is unique and beautiful. Do you know that African hair is the only type of hair that can be braided/plaited effectively?

The texture, appearance, coils, and versatility of our hair make it very suitable for braiding creating stunning looks that celebrate natural texture and individuality.

Type 4A hair.

This type as we said in the earlier article has well-defined S-shaped curls. Its curls are relatively looser compared to other types of type 4 hair but are dense.

Type 4A hair is soft and fragile with a fine texture. It is for this reason that it retains moisture relatively well making it more manageable for various styles like twist-outs and braid-outs.

Type 4B Hair

This type has less-defined zigzag pattern curls. The coils resemble a Z shape because they are tighter and less and less defined than type 4A.

It has a cotton-like texture which makes it feel fluffy on the touch, and has more shrinkage than 4A.

It tends to benefit from styles that stretch the hair to enhance its length appearance like twist-outs and Bantu knots.

Type 4C Hair

Has minimal definition with a dense zig-zag or coil pattern. Its coils are tightly packed ranging from fine to coarse.

It is the most fragile hair type that is prone to shrinkage and appears dense and wiry.

Due to its fragile nature, it requires handling with care and regular moisturizing including putting on protective styles to minimize manipulation.

The texture and coils provide a natural grip that makes braiding easier because the coils interlock with each other creating a strong foundation for intricate braided styles. It also allows for flexibility in creating different braid sizes and patterns.

Due to the natural resilience of the coils, type 4 hair once braided tends to hold styles well. This kind of durability makes braided styles last for an extended period without unraveling or becoming frizzy.

Not to forget that the distinct patterns of Type 4 hair enhance the visual appeal of braided hairstyles, creating stunning looks that celebrate natural texture and individuality.

African Hair alias Type 4 hair is versatile and beautiful but requires specific care due to its unique characteristics. Moisture retention is crucial for maintaining healthy Type 4 hair, as it can be prone to dryness and breakage. Protective styling e.g. braids, cornrows, etc., and gentle handling during detangling and styling can help minimize damage and promote length retention. The key to managing Type 4 hair lies in understanding its specific needs and embracing its natural texture and beauty.

In the next article, we’ll be discussing “Which style suits Who i.e. color of braids, face shape, complexion.”

We’ll also be exploring the techniques to make our hair more stunning and healthy for braiding because braiding is part of our culture.

**Which Style For Who**

Have you ever wondered why a certain style would look good on someone else and not the other?

Or why a certain braid color looks good on someone of a certain complexion and not the other?

Or why do certain braid colors look stunning and complement a certain hair color and not the other?

Well it is because for a particular braiding hairstyle to look stunning and aesthetic in appearance:

One has to get the color of the braids to compliment their own complexion and hair color.

The hairstyle has to be picked in such a way that it compliments one’s face shape

The density and volume of the hair have to be scrutinized so adjustments can be made to achieve the look one is going for.

The type of braid you choose has to be of the right texture as some braids look frizzy and are not smooth and soft to the touch hence difficult to manipulate.

Lastly, get your hair done by a competent hairdresser who understands their job well to avoid getting shoddy work done on your hair,

\*\*This is assuming that the hair is healthy and does not have any serious issues related to its texture.

\*\*Any style will not look good on unhealthy hair even if you got the above right, in that case, one should consider getting treatment for the particular problem first instead of wasting efforts.

It requires some level of expertise, experience, and trial and error to get the above combination right for that stunning appearance.

Don’t ever miss any article of this series as we’ll be sharing some useful tips on how to get the combination right as we participate in challenges on suitability.

Braids color To Suit Complexion

Your skin color tone and eye color play a crucial role in determining the color of the braid you pick. There are three main types of skin tones i.e. warm, cool, or neutral.

**Skin Tone.**

To easily identify your skin tone, observe the blood veins in your skin, especially your wrist: people with a warm skin tone tend to have greenish veins, while those with a cool tone would probably have bluish veins if you have neither then you probably have a neutral tone.

If you have warm undertones (yellow, peachy, or golden hues in your skin), go for braid colors like honey blonde, caramel, copper, rich brown shades, maroon, and red.

For cool undertones (pink, red, or bluish hues in your skin), choose braid colors such as ashy blonde, platinum, jet black, cool brown shades, blue or purple.

As for those with a neutral skin tone, well any color goes. Colors such as green, yellow, white, and orange tend to compliment any look and will depend on how well you pick your clothes and your personality. These are colors for the bold personality type.

As for those who like taking no chances with their looks then black braids are your go-to.

**Eye Color.**

Take into account your eye color. Sometimes coordinating with your eye color (e.g., warm browns with brown eyes, cool tones with blue or gray eyes) can create a harmonious look.

The same criteria for skin tones apply here: brown eyes can pick braid colors for the warm skin tone while blue/grey eyes pick braids for cool tones, however, those with black colors can pick any color so long as you take into account your skin tone to strike the proper balance and combination.

Consider also your overall contrast level. If you have high contrast (e.g., very dark skin with light eyes), bold colors like deep browns, blacks, or even vibrant colors can work well. For lower contrast (similar depth of skin, eyes, and hair), subtler shades might be more flattering.

After following the criteria above one more thing to consider would be how much upkeep you are willing to commit to considering that some colors require more maintenance than others to keep looking fresh and vibrant i.e. the bright colors in particular.

Now you are close enough to picking the most suitable braid color for yourself but just remember that ultimately, you should be able to choose a color that makes you feel confident and comfortable. Your intuition about what looks good on you is often a valuable guide.

**Braid Color To Compliment Your Hair Color**

Not much can be said on this one only that if you like your hair to still look uniform and neat after some time, then get a braid color that is as close to your hair color as possible.

This is because a brighter or darker braid color than your hair color will look unkept once the hair starts to unravel or become frizzy which most people do not like.

Another trick would also be to die your hair color to a color closer to what you intend to use for your braids, this way your braided hair will still look neat after some time.

Now you can confidently pick the most suitable braid color. In our next article, we’ll find you the right hairstylist.

**Getting The Right Hairstylist.**

The best way to pick a hairstylist is usually by recommendations i.e. recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues. These people will give you recommendations to the hairstylists who dress their hair into some particular styles which you like.

Personally, during my whole career, referrals have been my biggest marketing strategy: You do a good job on a client's hair and let them advertise you and within no time you have a big clientele base.

The good thing with the recommendations strategy is you get to see what the hairstylist you are opting for can do.

Check the stylist's portfolio or online gallery to see examples of their work. Most stylists nowadays will also have YouTube channels where you can interact and see what they do. Pay attention to styles and techniques similar to what you're looking for.

A good stylist should actively listen to your preferences and concerns after all you are the king. They should also provide constructive advice based on your hair type, face shape, and lifestyle, and be keen to listen to them cause you are never always right.

Consider practical factors like the stylist's availability for appointments and the convenience of the salon's location. There is nothing as disappointing as a stylist failing to honor their appointment especially if you were planning to show up somewhere.

Finally, don't hesitate to try different stylists until you find the right match. Sometimes it takes a few visits to establish a good rapport and achieve your desired look.

**Picking the Right Type of Braid**

This used to be an issue during the times when clients purchased their braids but it is no longer the case as most stylists now purchase braids for their clients. Most experienced stylists already know the best braids to use to maintain neatness and which are easy to braid.

If you are buying your braids on your own you should consult with your hairdresser first, so they can inform you which one maintains its neatness and is soft and easy to deal with.

The length of the braid will also play a significant role of course depending on the style you are going for. But as a general rule long braids tend to look neater and sleek because they do not run out quickly i.e. they go a long way before you have to feed in more especially if you are doing long braids or cornrows or feed-ins.

Long braids also save time that would be used to feed in more braids when you are using shorter braids. However when one is doing short styles such as bob then short braids would be a go-to.

The length of the braid boils down to the preference of the hairdresser who would dress your hair.

**Density of Hair**

The density and volume of one's hair is a significant factor to be considered.

Not once or twice but multiple times during my hairdressing career did I always find myself in a situation where a client wanted a hairstyle to appear the same exact way they saw in a photo, but most of the time this would be unachievable because the client either had more or less hair than the person in the picture.

In such a situation I would honestly tell the client that they can't be the same but will still look good if all the other factors have been considered.

Having different volumes of hair will make the same hairstyle look different on different individuals but still be beautiful on all of them that is if all the other factors were considered.

So this factor will only work against you if you expect the same exact appearance of a style for different people. But if you just relax and let things happen then who knows you might even end up being with the better version of the style than the one you intended. I have seen people who end up looking better with a style than the person they were trying to look like.

**Face Shape**

This is the most dynamic factor, not because the face shape is always changing but because hairstyles keep changing. You will always find yourself asking if a certain particular style will look good on you in the fear that it might turn out to be a disaster because of your face shape.

This is the reason why most people will stick to the style that first suits them and will avoid trying out new styles i.e. take no chances at all.3we