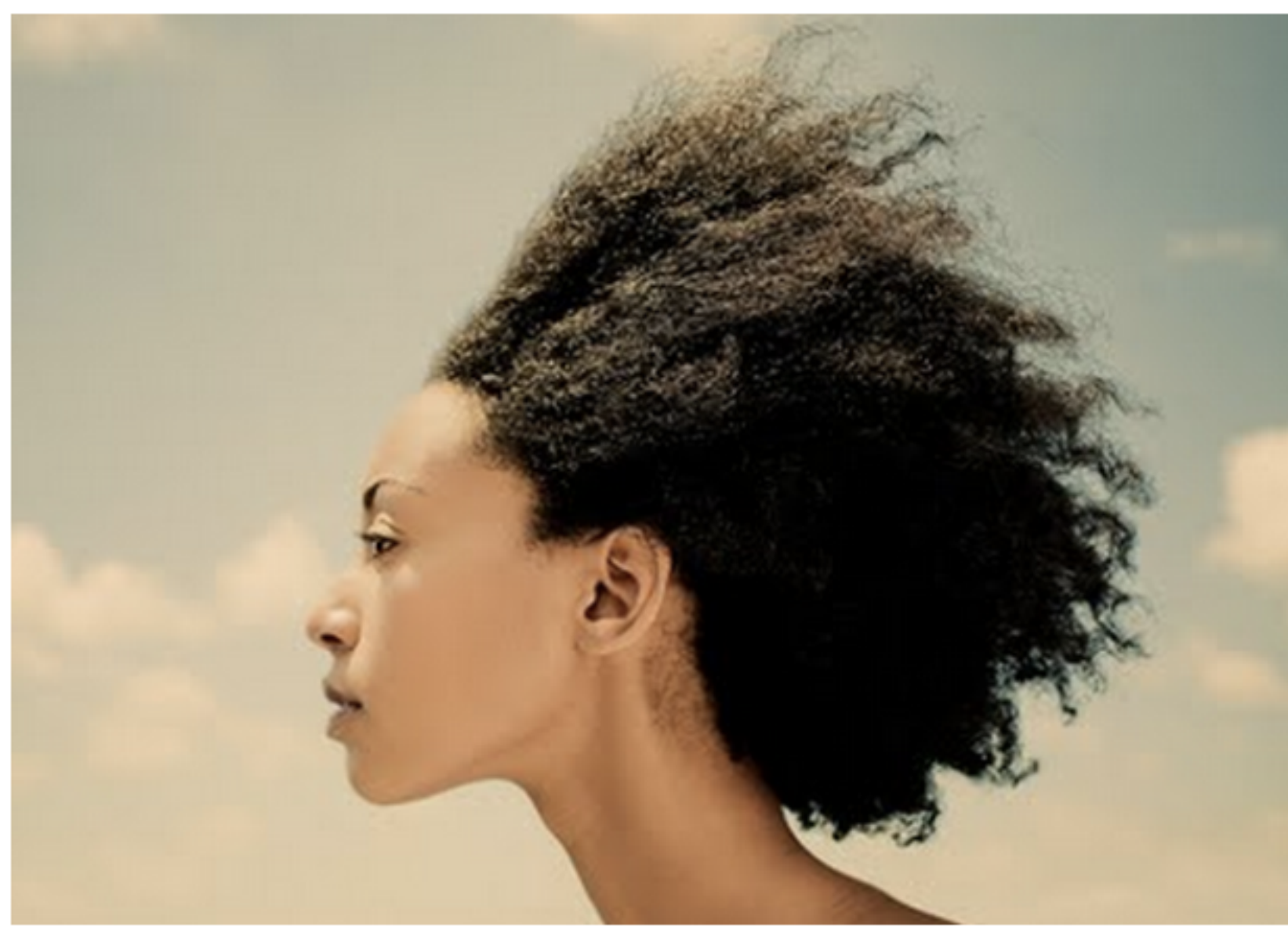


URBAN OUTFITTERS  **Free Shipping on Orders Over \$50** [SHOP NOW](#)

I Am Not My Hair

BY AUTUMNE MONTAGUE • DECEMBER 30, 2012 • BODY IMAGE, EDITORIAL



Hair is such a touchy subject. No, really – a lot of people have touched my hair. From well-meaning friends to opinionated family members to complete strangers, chances are if you're a black woman, someone has laid their hands upon your head and offered their wisdom. They have told you that your hair is too short, can't possibly be that long, that you should stop wearing weaves, but you should really think about a weave, and stop relaxing your hair, or don't you know you're not only damaging your hair but your psyche as well by aspiring to a beauty standard that was put in place by a patriarchal society? Why, yes, black women and hair go *that* deep.

We have a long history with our hair. We have been exposed to and bombarded with a strict European standard of beauty (actually ALL women have). One of the first African-American millionaires was Madame C.J. Walker who developed her own line of hair care products, which came about when she was searching for a way to treat her own hair loss. **I will venture that almost every black girl has a hair story or at least a hair situation.** We can't swim or sweat after a wash and set or press and curl if we want it to keep. We grow up learning from family members, friends, or the media about "good" hair and "bad" hair. We are basically being told that our hair is either right or wrong depending on how kinky, curly, or straight it is. We, as a whole, go to such lengths to achieve the length that we think we are supposed to have. We have Just For Me, mild relaxers being applied to little girls as young as four-years-old. We see Beyonce with her long, blonde hair on stage, yet we rarely see her with her own hair in its natural state and we believe that she owes that to us as well.

Our hair comes in all types, lengths, and colors. We can wear it up, down, to the side, with bangs (don't cut them yourself!), relaxed, blow-dried straight, curled, in curls, in braids, twists, or just pulled back in a hurry. With so many options, it's no wonder there are so many opinions about how our hair should look. Hair is there at first sight. It's a part of us, yet we have let it come to define us in whole. How we style our hair purports to say something about our personality. And that may be true, if that is our intention. If we have relaxed hair, we can be accused of practically hating ourselves. If we change our hair in the slightest from its natural state, are we automatically succumbing to beauty standards? Or is it a personal decision how we wear our hair? Is it really anyone else's business why we do what we do with our hair?

Our relationship with our hair has never been so public. From the 2009 Chris Rock movie *Good Hair* to the uproar over Olympic gold medalist gymnast [Gabby Douglas' pulled back 'do](#). Commenters, many of them black women, were questioning why her hair wasn't perfectly straight; why didn't she get a touch-up before the Games? **Gabby was on her way to becoming the first African-American woman gymnast to win the All-Around. She was making history; we were talking about her hair.**

Even more recently, Rhonda Lee, a black female meteorologist for KTBS in Louisiana, was [fired for defending her hair choices](#). A viewer wrote a comment on the news channel's Facebook page saying that she should "wear a wig or grow some more hair" and went on to question if perhaps she (was) a cancer patient because she wore her hair in a short and natural fashion. In response, Ms. Lee took to the air:

"I'm sorry you don't like my ethnic hair... I am very proud of my African-American ancestry which includes my hair... Many Black women use strong straightening agents in order to achieve a more European grade of hair and that is their choice. However in my case I don't find it necessary... Showing little girls that being comfortable in the skin and hair God gave me is my contribution to society."

Subsequently, Ms. Lee was let go from the station because she was said to have violated a policy concerning how employees are to respond to Facebook posts. Unfortunately, the exact policy violated has not been made public, but from what little information we are given, I will assume that it includes answering rude questions with politeness and imparting a bit of knowledge in the process.

We should be making style decisions based on factors of our own choosing, be it to emulate Beyonce or Viola Davis or whomever we choose or no one at all. We have to seek out our own hair mentors. We have to clamor for them, so that it becomes an everyday occurrence to see black women with weaves and wigs and relaxers and curly hair and straight hair and braids and twists, and know that we are making choices, *not* statements.

Or just listen to "I Am Not My Hair" by India.Arie. She really says it best.

Written by Autumnne Montague

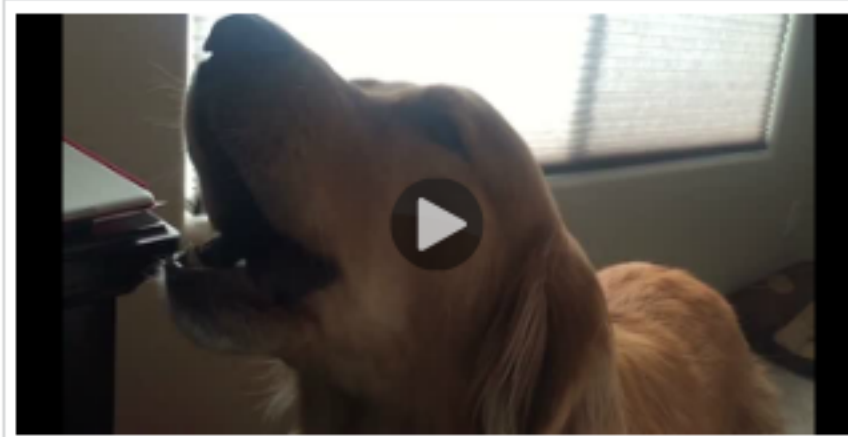
7
 Tweet
 66
 reddit
 37
 Like
 1
 G+1
 Share
 tumblr.

7
 Tweet
 66
 reddit
 37
 Like
 1
 G+1
 Share
 tumblr.

7
 Tweet
 66
 reddit
 37
 Like
 1
 G+1
 Share
 tumblr.


7
 Tweet
 66
 reddit
 37
 Like
 1
 G+1
 Share
 tumblr.

weebly
 Start Your Something
 WEBSITE BLOG STORE
[Try It Free](#)

 [Now Playing](#)
 Recommended for you
 The Truth Behind Way Scari...
 feminspire.com

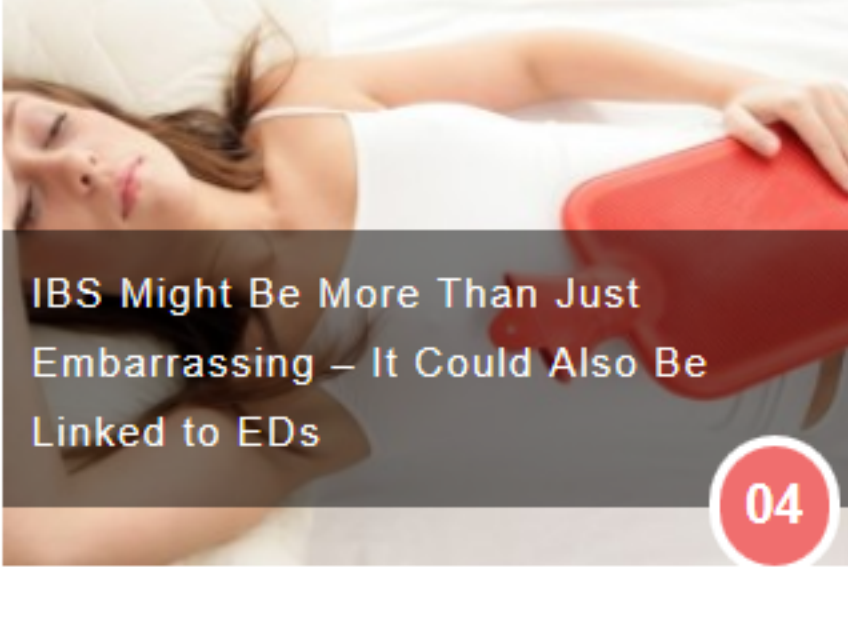
POPULAR POSTS


 Feminists #AskedThicke, Because We Know He Wants It **01**


 See How This Feminist Artist Brings Women's Struggles to Life **02**

75325491_e0cf04e5-c8f8-47eb-9d49-5e11082eeb75-600x313

The Most Important Thing 'Orange is the New Black' is Teaching Us **03**

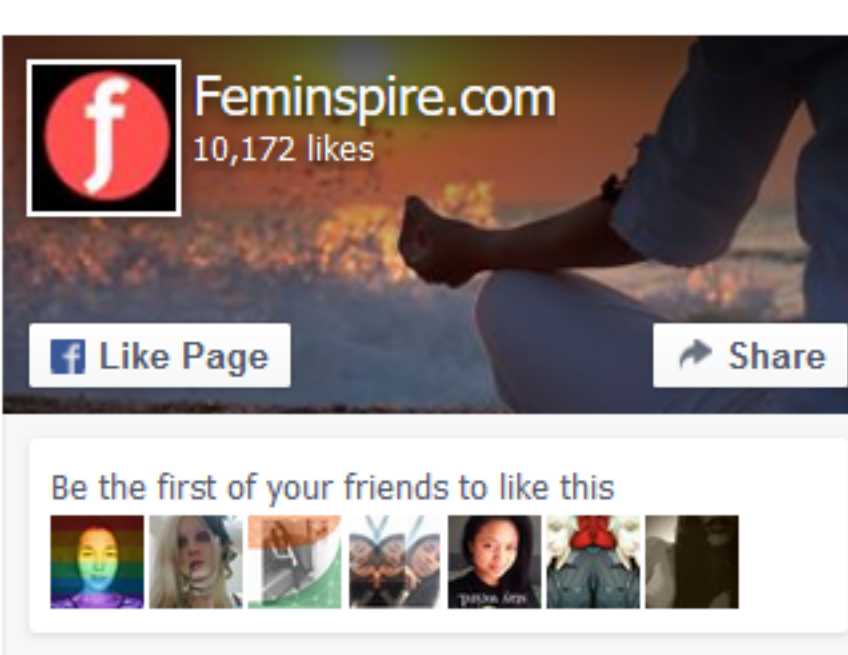

 IBS Might Be More Than Just Embarrassing – It Could Also Be Linked to EDs **04**

GeorgiaBoonshoft_DSC4515-500x325

My Disordered Eating Gave Me Wings – Until it Took Away the Sky **05**

FOLLOW FEMINSPIRE!
 f t g+ i t p

LIKE US!


 Feminspire.com 10,172 likes
 Like Page Share
 Be the first of your friends to like this