
T.W.A. Q & A

By Willow Curry

There's an interesting phenomenon sweeping the halls of PVA that's pretty simple, as far as styles go. Take a look at the next black girl you see. Notice her hairstyle. It might be straight, but it also might be a natural style, some variation of an afro or braids or twists. And she might have it cut short, in what is called a TWA or "teeny-weeny afro" in the natural hair community. Natural hair hasn't always been accepted in America, and many would argue that it still isn't. Advertisements and television shows rarely feature black women with natural hair, and in the black community the perception of natural hair is even less flattering. Though progressive blacks are beginning to accept that hair can be beautiful whether it's straight or not, many still think that naturally curly, fluffy hair is just ugly. Because of this complicated background, it's uplifting to see more black girls at PVA who feel confident enough to wear their hair the way THEY want it, stereotypes be damned. To explore this trend further, I talked to fellow PVA naturalistas Breasha Blaylock, Cabria Scott, Jamie Perry, and Maya Williams.

Q: When did you decide to go natural and/or cut your hair? Why?

Cabria: I decided when I was in ninth grade. I wasn't really happy with being permed. Plus I've always liked big hair, like Chaka Khan big. So one day I said, "Okay, I'll be like her and wear natural hair!"

Jamie: I went natural in July of 2012. I was ready for a fresh start and I was tired of relaxers! I would spend HOURS at the beauty shop. I realized that I could be spending my time doing homework, practicing violin, etc., so I decided to go natural.

Willow: I've always had natural hair, but taking care of it when it's long is extremely difficult. I tried nearly every hairstyle under the sun to find something I could keep up with, but junior year I decided it had to go (sorry, Mr. Sanders!).

Q: Were you scared?

Breasha: I was extremely scared when my mom cut it! I was always used to the idea that long hair was "better" and "prettier" than short hair, but I decided to take that risk because it would be better for my hair.

Jamie: I was TERRIFIED! As soon as I sat down in the chair and the hairdresser started snipping, I felt....robbed. All of my hair was GONE! It was a freeing, but life changing experience.

Willow: I was super frightened that I'd have a funny shaped head. Because once you cut off your hair there's no escape route if your head looks like a cone or something.

Q: What was the reaction at school like? In your personal life?

Cabria: At school, people really liked it. My mom didn't really understand, though. She would tell me, kind of joking, "You need to get a perm." She likes it more now, though.

Maya: I think the reactions were better at school than at home, especially on my dad's side. My aunts would tease me about it.

Willow: At school, the reaction was great. People were stunned but said it was really beautiful. On the other hand, every time I cut it, the reaction from my family and church becomes more negative.

Q: In general, what's the environment for black girls with natural hair at PVA?

Jamie: The environment is open for change! It's so refreshing to be accepted in my school environment and I thank each student here for being an AWESOME and accepting family!

Maya: I don't think it's a big deal here. It's just like anyone else getting a haircut.

Breasha: At first it was a little annoying to have people touching my hair all the time, but over time that has eased up a bit. There were not nearly as many natural girls at PVA two years ago as there are now, so I can understand their amazement.

Q: How do you feel about your decision?

Cabria: I feel happy about it. I'm glad I'm a natural. I just can't wait for it to get really big!

Jamie: I feel that I made a great decision. By cutting my hair, I freed myself of the bondage of relaxed hair! Relaxed hair is beautiful, don't misunderstand; however, I feel that natural hair lets you embrace your natural beauty as an African American woman.

Breasha: Going natural was the best choice I've ever made for my hair, and it is much healthier now than it ever was. I love it!

