Hair

Never a Hair Out of Place
Squeaky Clean and Never Bald-Headed
Resonja Willoughby

The Procedure: More than Hair-Washing
As a child I never knew what it was to have a hair out of place. Every weekend my three sisters and I would lie down on the cold kitchen counter and get our heads submerged underneath warm rushing water. As the glare of light beamed in through the window, our mother gently placed a towel over our faces to keep the water out of our eyes and to keep us from drowning. She washed our hair with Tide detergent. Yes, that’s right, you read that correctly. Miss Joyce Elaine (my mother) was too cheap to use shampoo on her girls’ heads, so she used Tide detergent, but those heads were squeaky clean and never bald-headed.

Then came the heat of the pressing comb to straighten all of the naps out of our heads. Correction: I should say my naps, since I was the only one with a “kitchen” in the back of my head. (For those who don’t know, a kitchen is when your hair in the back doesn’t grow evenly with the rest and your hair.) After the heat, along came that thick Royal Crown grease. Miss Joyce had just washed all of the oil out of our...
Hair

hair, but then she’d slap it back in with a scoop of Royal Crown grease. My mother didn’t use conditioner at all, and we had long, healthy hair.

As I look back, I see that this procedure was about more than hair-washing. Our mother was teaching us to have pride in ourselves. Although it was an external action, it made us feel cared for and loved.

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**No More Tide! Now I Use My Own Concoction**

But we are going to speed up this story. It is 2017 now, and I’m all natural. In my life, I have spent thousands of dollars trying to find the right food for my hair, but now I use an inexpensive home-made concoction. I make a gel from flax seed with lavender and tea tree oil. It is, by far, the best for my hair. I don’t use any other greases or creams. I have never felt love for my hair as much as I do today. I love how it feels, and those naps that most Black people turn their nose up to—I invite them with love.

**Resonja Willoughby got her GED after studying at Next Step Learning Center in Oakland, CA. She currently works at Second Start Adult Literacy Program as a Student Advocate. She has returned to Next Step to work on the Wilson Reading Program, a program designed for people with dyslexia. Resonja’s plan is to move on toward getting a certificate in Naturopathic medicine.**

**Take It Further**

“Never a hair out of place.” What does this phrase mean? Do you think the author means it literally or figuratively? Have you ever known anyone who never had a hair out of place?

**Find more hair idioms** on p. 53. Make up your own sentences using hair idioms.

**What are the three timeframes** discussed in this article? List them here:

1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________________

**Share stories** from similar timeframes in your life—your childhood, your parents’ childhood, and now. What is the best order to tell your stories? (There’s no right answer.) See the story “At Peace with His Hair” on p. 19. Notice especially the chronology of the story.