

ugly and unclean in comparison to the flowing, bouncy hair of people from other cultures, according to a recent article in Black Enterprise Magazine.

The caricatures of blacks who surfaced during that time in movies, children's books, on laundry detergent and food products were commonplace, and they taught blacks and whites alike to loathe the appearance of black hair and to associate it with dirtiness, unruliness and even character traits like laziness and dishonesty, according to the article.

In the 1970s, natural hair took a slightly positive turn when Afros became known as a political statement for activists who wanted to revel in black beauty.

As a child, George recalled the pressure to get her natural hair chemically relaxed rather than wear her hair natural.

"It was a transition to becoming a woman," said George, who got her first relaxer at the age of 14. "The older you got, it was expected that you would get one."

She added, "Finally, my hair was not a curse anymore."

The negative connotation surrounding natural hair continued into George's college years as she prepared to become an engineer.

"We were told that we were entering a very conservative field," she said. "If you wanted to get anywhere, then you had to fit the mold."

It was not until 2009 when George began noticing a growing number of women in the National Society of Black Engineers, of which she is an officer, wearing their hair natural that she finally took an interest in breaking free from relaxers, commonly known as creamy crack.

"These women were my complexion and had my type of hair," said George, who had grown tired of the cost and time associated with maintaining relaxed hair. "Nobody seemed to treat them differently. I saw you could still wear your natural and still be vice president, president, and entrepreneur or even have a Ph.D."

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A look at Black Enterprise magazine's 75 Most Powerful Women in Business list yields several women in power with natural hair, including Ursula Burns CEO of Xerox; Julia Brown, senior vice president of Kraft Foods; and Susan E. Chapman, global head of operations and strategy for Citigroup Corporate Realty Services.

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For University of Houston-Victoria senior Keisha Smith, going natural was more about attaining a healthier body and healthier hair.

Smith, 24, was unable to go swimming or participate in any activity that caused heavy sweating because moisture prompted her relaxed hair to revert back to a kinkier state.

When her hair did get wet, constant heat styling was necessary to re-straighten it.

"Ponytails and heat styling was a lot for my hair," said Smith, who went natural in 2009. "I got frustrated."

During her 27 years in the hair styling business, stylist Lisa Smith said she has seen firsthand the damaging effects of relaxers on Afro-textured hair.

"You didn't really see as much breakage with relaxers back then as you do now. I'm not sure whether it is the chemicals in it," she said. "Anytime you use chemicals, if you are not conditioning and moisturizing, then it is going to be damaged."

The stylist recommends people with relaxed hair visit a trained stylist bi-weekly if not weekly for regular maintenance.

But no matter how many salon visits someone with relaxed hair makes, Smith said medications, stress and underlying medical conditions can all impact the effect of relaxers on Afro-textured hair.


Chemical relaxers, which are commonly made with harsh chemicals such as Sodium Hydroxide or Guanidine Hydroxide, can result in hair breakage, hair thinning, and lack of hair growth, scalp irritation, scalp damage and even hair loss, according to www.skinbiology.com.

"Just as people are becoming more conscious of the foods that they are putting into their bodies and the different beauty products and things we are using on ourselves and in our hair, I think the more people that know what goes into these products may inspire more people to start moving

when she wore an Afro while covering the wedding of Tricia Nixon Cox, daughter of President Richard Nixon. The station threatened to take Tolliver off ...

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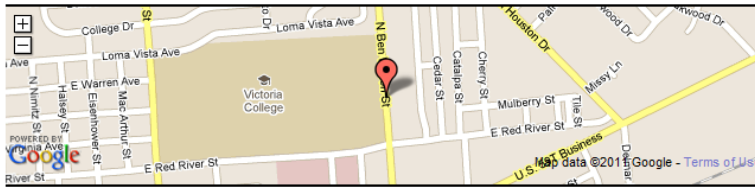
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away from relaxed hair," said Keisha Smith. "It may continue the natural hair movement."

For the time being, George said she is happy with her hair and has no plans to return to a chemical relaxer.

She is even hoping to expand her engineering expertise.

"My plans are to get (my Afro) as big as possible," said George. "I've learned that you have to embrace yourself and love yourself."



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I enjoyed the story. Natural hair has become a movement, as more black women are embracing their natural beauty. I'm very supportive of this movement and have started a website dedicated to women with natural hair. Check us out at: www.naturalhaircommunity.com

March 9, 2011 at 9:30 a.m.



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Thank you for a very interesting article. All you have to do is visit any inter-city Beauty Supply Store; you will find hair on every wall. Hair for who? Hair for us! It's not hard to understand why Black women are going natural. Super Curly hair is good hair too, and thank God we are finally realizing this!

New Options Professional Hair Care / facebook

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March 4, 2011 at 10:01 p.m.



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Also, to help her grow her afro, she can simply drink nzuri hair vitamins. That twa will grow out into a big afro! visit <http://www.liquidhairvitamins.com>

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