

Stop talking about my hair  
Long, kinky, coiled or cut  
Stop talking about my hair  
That backhanded blatancy is making me hate black people  
The more I hear “when are you gonna cut your hair?”  
Because that ignorance is not of us, but lord knows it’s in us  
And of course, its roots are watered with the best of intentions  
How could I hope to get a job with a head like that?  
With messy knotted hair like this  
You’ll always look like you’re fresh out of bed  
I don’t care  
I don’t want your input  
Stop talking about the hair on my head  
It’s not messy, it’s mine  
It’s me  
Why is my hair a statement before I so much as breath?  
When I enter rooms, I feel tones shift  
You don’t see me, you see my gift  
The loccs of love sheltering my mind  
I hate you for asking  
Keep my hair out your mouth  
I have never wondered about your preference  
How loccs only look nice when neat  
How afros are fun but  
Maybe not realistic  
How much better I looked when silk hid my hair  
And short, neat waves were the most expression I made  
Stop talking about my hair  
I understand why we do it  
I get it  
From generations of trauma gifted by the forces of hate  
Racism, xenophobia, tokenism  
I am well aware  
Of how professionalism begins with your hair  
In white spaces, race is best kept quiet  
Your words make me feel so ugly  
I don’t have any drawn out ancestrally guided metaphor  
About black pain born in the belly of wooden ships  
About black bodies broken and torn by whips  
About black hair stuffed in chairs to make cushions  
About leather made from black skin  
I don’t have much creativity to describe it  
It just hurts  
When every time I’m greeted by another black person  
First thing they do is pause  
After our hands meet and I hold your palm as I hail you  
You scramble for the most appropriate insult  
“So, you don’t like haircuts?”  
No  
I don’t like haircuts

I like castor and coconut oils  
I like the defiance of that one coil  
The one that sits on my forehead  
I like how my big sister braids me up  
I like how, even from my seated position she never speaks down on my head  
I like the coldness of the floor and the comfort of knees as my support  
Pointing the right side of my jaw to the ceiling,  
Pivoting the world sideways,  
I like moving to my hair's desire  
I like feeling the fullness of my hair  
I like feeling that resistance when I run  
I love feeling it pulse when I swim  
This love is new to me because for so long I never knew this luxury  
I never knew how good it felt to decide for myself  
Growing up my hair wasn't my own  
It belonged to the discretion of my parents  
Or the opinions of my family  
Or the banter of my classmates  
Or the rejection of my love interests  
Growing up, my hair didn't belong to me  
It was the cuttable piece of my identity  
And it always seemed necessary to cut it shorter  
Because black boys don't have long hair  
black boys don't have long braids  
Black boys cut their loccs  
Black boys get bald fades  
A lot of black men can't cry  
But I promise I bawl  
When it rains it pours and that's how my tears fall  
I've learned to love pieces of me that I never knew existed  
Listen close or you'll miss it  
My niece is four  
With the intelligence of a 20-year-old and the confidence of an Olympian  
She's an opinionated force to be reckoned with  
Just like me, and my brothers and my sisters, and her mother  
My niece is black  
Her favorite song is *Brown Skin Girl*  
When I drive, she controls the music  
And the song rotation is predictable  
Though the song has become sickeningly ingrained in my mind  
I can't say I'm tired of hearing her sing it  
I've always been black  
I've always known I was black  
My parents taught me to know that black is a great thing to be  
But hearing my niece sing  
It puts a melody to the beauty of blackness  
Because me and my guys never sang along to a song that celebrated us  
Not a song like this  
Not a song that said, "Don't touch my hair,"  
Not a song that called our bushy, knotty nests a crown  
It is upon black boys that black boys look down

It is upon black backs that batons crack  
 It is upon black ears that hate holds space  
 It is in black eyes that contempt resides  
 Because we've long been taught to hate each other  
 Why in black spaces is my natural hair a statement  
 Why in the company of my community do I field questions that only hope to inspire self-hate  
 Natural or straight, this debate is tired  
 My father told me that we are Sons of Solomon  
 A black king, an emperor  
 But neither you nor I are royals  
 There's no fault in that, there's no issue  
 The greatness of black heritage isn't based in monarchies  
 The greatness of black bodies is our presence  
 Our might  
 Our unrelenting perseverance  
 Our defiance, our variety  
 Our diversity  
 Because we hold space  
 In whatever form we come  
 We are the booming bassline and rolling waistlines  
 We are second line shawties down in Mississippi  
 We are African blood in Caribbean seas  
 We are the heat of the tropics and the strength of a continent  
 We are a rainbow  
 French vanilla, butter pecan, chocolate deluxe, even caramel sundaes is getting touched  
 You get me?  
 We are Black love, Brown pride in the sets again  
 We are the weight that grew too great to be bared by Poplar trees  
 We are the trendsetters, we are the culture, we are one extensive community  
 We are one people, and we are so many places  
 And we must protect every segment of us  
 Protect the lovers  
 Protect who and how they love because they are of us  
 Protect the fighters  
 Wrap their hands in cloth and steel and ready them for the daily war  
 Protect the families  
 Because though it may be mottled or misshapen, this family is mine  
 Protect your people  
 Love who you love because life isn't guaranteed  
 Protect authenticity  
 Because identity is unique and fluid  
 Protect me, protect them, protect us, protect yourself  
 Extend the love that you have longed to have  
  
 And don't you ever  
 fix your mouth  
 to tell me to fix my hair  
  
 It was never broken

By: Sion Symonds