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Photo by Lauren Jeziorski

THE SKIN ISSUE



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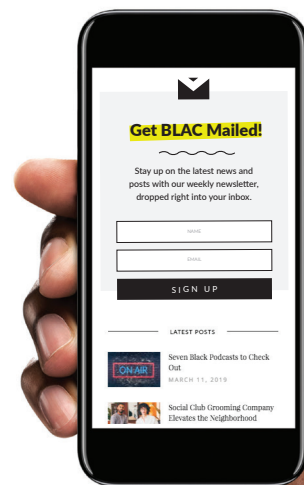
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BLAC
BLACK LIFE, ARTS & CULTURE



Ford Motor Company Fund

A year-long series featuring Detroiters who are driving positive change in their communities.

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Danielle Atkinson, Founder and Executive Director, Mothering Justice

A lifelong passion for advocacy led this mom of six to form an organization that empowers mothers of color to fight for economic equity.

It's sometimes thought that when a woman becomes a mother she's destined to become a shadow of herself, but Mothering Justice founder and executive director Danielle Atkinson says it's in this role that her true power is realized.

"In Michigan, in Detroit, black mothers are not only the center of their families, they're the center of their communities – and, we believe, the center of the economy," she says.

Founded in 2012, Mothering Justice, Atkinson says, is "an advocacy and leadership development

organization working to have a more equitable economic landscape in Michigan for families – and we really center our work around mothers of color, specifically black women."

Mothering Justice cultivates in its mothers the skills needed to take on the issues most relevant to their lives like. These include livable wages, earned paid sick time and leave, women's health, affordable child care and safety net programs. They call these pillars their "Mamas' Agenda," developed by having conversations with mothers

across communities in Michigan to identify their "pocketbook issues."

Atkinson elaborates: "What are the things that are the difference between making it and not making it?"

Mothering Justice was instrumental in helping the Workforce Opportunity Wage Act become law. In May 2014, former Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law changes to Michigan's minimum wage policy allowing for gradual increases to the minimum hourly wage through January 2018.

The nonprofit was also successful

in implementing earned paid sick time policies, and it's working toward bettering paid leave and filling the "holes" in safety net programs like Medicaid and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), all while keeping mom and baby safe.

"Detroit has one of the highest infant and maternal death rates in our country," Atkinson says, "and black women are disproportionately affected by these issues, trailing their white counterparts significantly in outcomes regardless of income or education level."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that black, American Indian and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. And, with regard to women over 30 specifically, they're four to five times more likely to die. Mothering Justice wants to address this disparity by encouraging holistic practices like employing doulas and midwives.

Atkinson says affordable child care is "the No. 1 issue that moms are talking about when they're talking about their ability to make ends meet. People are paying more for child care than they would for college."

The team wants to see government pool more money into this industry so that workers are paid more and more people are eligible for assistance and subsidies. She says, "This is something that hits close to home for me. When I had my first daughter, I couldn't afford to have her in care as much as I would've liked, because it just was not affordable."

She found that there was space for an organization that centered the concerns of mothers of color, and Mothering Justice was birthed. She says her passion for activism comes from her Jamaican-born parents who fled the country due to civil unrest.

"My mother was registering

people to vote before she could vote herself," Atkinson says. "At every moment, she let my sister and I know that we have to fight for everything, that the world will be unfair to us, but we can change things if we work together."

Mothering Justice offers training programs like its Mamas' University, which helps women of color "break down that internalized oppression and understand how organizing is in our blood, in our history, in our lineage." The Movement Fellowship is a nine-month paid fellowship during which mothers learn skills that they'll use to nudge Mothering Justice's agenda forward – and learn how to use those same skills in their own lives. Applications for the fellowship, starting in March, are open now.

After Trump was elected, Atkinson says white women came to them and said, "We want to help, we want to do things, we're like, 'OK, that's great, but you need to learn how to follow.'" So, they implemented the Accountability Academy to teach white allies to understand white privilege and how white feminism has been a player in institutional racism, inviting them to come into the organization but imploring them to do so in a way that's respectful.

An empowered mother is not always perfect. Atkinson says, "They can be hurt, they can be vulnerable, but they understand that they can overcome and that we have to work together."



"It takes a village to raise a child – but just one person to change a community."

Ford Motor Company congratulates Danielle Atkinson of Mothering Justice in her quest to empower women to fight for economic equity. Like Danielle, Ford is committed to empowering women to maximize available resources for better economic stability.

For years, Ford Motor Company has invested in programming and initiatives such as HerImpact, Freedom Sisters and Ford 1st Gen, designed to provide women with skills, knowledge and resources to promote personal and economic growth. With access to the right resources and opportunities anything is possible!

– Pamela Alexander, director of community development for Ford Motor Company



RAISING UP

For more information about Mothering Justice or to find out how you can get involved, visit motheringjustice.org or check out their social media pages.

SKIN DEEP

Biting cold and bone-dry air. The harsh winter months aren't exactly an elixir for our skin. But fear not. Board certified in both dermatology and internal medicine, black Detroit's go-to dermatologist Dr. Brittany Carter-Snell of The Carter Snell Skin Center is offering salvation for your tired skin. Follow the Midtown doctor's tips for beautiful, healthy skin year-round and prolong that melanin magic.



Carter Snell Skin Center
72 Erskine St., Detroit
cartersegnellskin.com

1

STAY WITH THE SUNSCREEN.

"Many people get confused about whether or not sunscreen is a necessity during the wintertime – and the answer is yes," Carter-Snell says. The doctor recommends that you "kill two birds with one stone" and adopt a daily moisturizer that contains SPF. Her favorite affordable brands include CeraVe and La Roche-Posay by L'Oréal, which features a sun protection factor of 30 – what she considers the bare minimum and typically sufficient during the winter months – but, "The higher the better."

There's a common misconception among black people that we don't need sunscreen. Let's bust that myth. "Our melanin gives us a sun protection factor of at least 8 to 11. So, you're missing protection," Carter-Snell says. We're more susceptible to hyperpigmentation, and we can get sunburned or even skin cancer. While it's true that the risk for cancer is lower than in people with lighter skin, the doctor warns that because black folk are not as frequently checked for skin cancer, when it is caught, it's often too late.

2

UP THE SPF WHEN VACATIONING.

For the snowbirds that look to escape the cold by jetting off to warmer climates, Carter-Snell suggests increasing your normal SPF. "When you've gone a prolonged period of time without having your skin exposed to sun, when it is exposed to sun it's very much a shock, and that's when you're at higher risk of being burned," she says.

So, if you've been using an SPF 30, for example, when you hit those sandy beaches you'll want to up that to SPF 50 or 70. And resist the urge to let it all hang out and instead go for protective clothing like sun hats and long sleeves and pants in lightweight materials.

3

AVOID HARSH PRODUCTS AND FRAGRANCES.

Carter-Snell recommends fragrance-free products, especially during the wintertime. "The skin is naturally drier, and the fragrance is going to more easily cause irritation" to already compromised skin, she says. This is the time to give your smell-good soaps, body washes and lotions a rest. Also beware of laundry products – detergents, fabric softeners and dryer sheets – which are also often teeming with harsh, potentially harmful fragrances that can cause itching and irritation.

The dermatologist says to avoid *all* fragrances, not just the synthetic chemicals, and that "unscented" is not the same as "fragrance-free." Products touted as unscented may contain masking fragrances used to camouflage the scent. Instead, opt for products with moisturizers and healers like hyaluronic acid and ceramides, or natural ingredients like shea butter and lighter plant-based oils.

4

KEEP AN EYE ON SCALP HEALTH.

Many of Carter-Snell's patients come into her office this time of year with scalp conditions. "So I do like to stress scalp health especially for our community, because we have a tendency to wear really pretty protective stylings – and that doesn't always allow us to cleanse our scalp or shampoo as often as we would otherwise," she says. That dryness or flakiness that may seem like benign dandruff could worsen if left untreated or may be a symptom of a more serious problem.

"The scalp should not solely be greased and expected to resolve itself. It could be a yeast causing an actual dermatological condition called seborrheic (dermatitis) that would need to be evaluated by a dermatologist," Carter-Snell says. Schedule a sit-down with your doctor if routine scalp moisturizing isn't helping the issue or if you start experiencing itching, irritation, hair loss or acne-like breakouts on your face, neck or back.

BLOOD

When Cheryl Garnett was 16, her grandmother gave her their family tree and asked her to finish it. She didn't start immediately, but the stories and connections she's discovered while exploring her lineage through DNA makes her wish she'd done it earlier.

"Every day I learn something about who I am. Learning the stories of our parents and our blood should be one of the most important things to our community," Garnett says.

Both Garnett and her close friend Omer Jean Winborn share "the bug" for history and gene research. The women are on the board of the Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society, and they love it. There's just one problem – it's all the way in Detroit. Winborn and Garnett are based in Washtenaw County, an area they say is rich in untold African American history.

"We say that if you can't find your ancestors in the South, look to the North and Canada. Places like Washtenaw and Ypsilanti are covered in figurative tracks from the Underground Railroad," Winborn says.

Six years ago, Garnett and Winborn joined hands and founded The Washtenaw County Af-



Photo by K Amelia Visions

BONDS

rican American Genealogy Society to help locals learn about their roots, and they discovered that they weren't just family in spirit.

"My father came from Tennessee in the Migration, and he couldn't read. I looked into him with Cheryl's help, and we found out we were related through our Canadian family – black British loyalist family, if you can believe it," Winborn says.

– A.S.

WCAAGS meets at 10:30 a.m. every third Saturday at the Ypsilanti District Library's Michigan Avenue branch. There, they also host a free one-on-one Ancestry.com class the first of every month.

THE GOOD STUFF

For Marlin Hughes, two watershed moments motivated him to make changes that led him to open a restaurant. When his son Noel, now 21 years old, was diagnosed with autism at 2, Hughes switched him to a gluten- and dairy-free diet to help his condition.

Then, Hughes' father died from lung cancer 12 years ago. Hughes took stock of his life – because he smoked, drank alcohol and was overweight. "My life changed. My dad died, and I walked away from where I was," Hughes says.

The clincher for Hughes was a milestone birthday party he threw for his wife Kita in 2011. He made stuffed peppers, the hit of the party. Hughes prophetically told his wife, "One of these days, we're going to sell these peppers."

Hughes and Kita purchased a building in the East English Village and, after spending a couple years getting it together and landing a \$45,000 Motor City Match award in 2017, The Detroit Pepper Company was born in 2019.

The carryout-only eatery

features stuffed bell peppers (including a vegan option), salads, soups, grain bowls, fresh smoothies and more. "All the ingredients are made from scratch. It's not a prepackaged process – it's all made with love," says Chef Hughes.

After appearing on WDIV TV's Tasty Tuesday segment in December, the restaurant saw a barrage of customers eager to see what all the fuss was about. "We were ready, but we still sold out. The door never stopped opening."

– A.B.

17180 E. Warren Ave., Detroit • thedetroitpeppercompany.com



SOUL FOOD

Jetuan Lanette Perkins was a loving mother, social worker and activist with a passion for serving her community. "My wife loved to do community outreach and food was always part of it – things like picnics for Angel's Night volunteers – but she always wanted her own restaurant," Todd Perkins says.

Lanette passed away from lupus complications in 2016, but her dream was realized last August when Todd opened a shrimp house named in her honor. It lives in a Highland Park storefront that used to be home to Miley & Miley Shrimp Shack – a city seafood staple until it closed about six years ago.

Lanette's Shrimp House serves the classic Miley trio of fried shrimp, fish and wings alongside soul food sides, plus new additions to the menu like turkey tacos.

Todd says, "Jetuan believed in black people working towards strong communities that feed and support themselves and each other." Lanette's is hard to miss. The shack is accented in purple for lupus awareness and Mrs. Perkins' favorite color. **B**

– A.S.



**13548 Woodward Ave., Highland Park
lanettes-shrimp-house.business.site**

My Gold Lining

I got my first boil in sixth grade. Because I was severely overweight – 300 pounds and prediabetic – I thought the boil was just another health concern that would come and go. I was wrong. The boils kept coming until one day I looked in the mirror and my underarms, underneath my breasts, my back, my stomach and other intimate spaces were covered in boils, sinus tracts (tunneling wounds underneath the skin) and scar tissue.

For three years I had no answers. My health declined and, at the end of each day, my shirt, underwear and bra were covered in pus and blood. My self-esteem took a nose dive into the ground as I grew lonelier and more isolated. I numbed myself emotionally as a coping mechanism.

I was in and out of doctors' offices so much I began feeling like a science experiment. Physicians were just as flabbergasted as I was. They'd run tests and say I had a staph infection. No, it was MRSA. No, it was a rare blood disorder that was life-threatening. I began losing trust in Western medicine until my mother found a clinical trial through Henry Ford Hospital describing my symptoms.

That's when I met Dr. Iltefat Hamzavi, a dermatologist specializing in the treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa, a chronic skin condition featuring lumps in places like the armpits or groin. Skin lesions develop as a result of inflammation and infection of sweat glands. Dr. Hamzavi diagnosed me with HS, and I began treatment almost immediately and was relieved. However, my journey to healing had just begun.

After years of taking antibiotics like Clindamycin and rifampin with little to no relief from HS, I decided to take matters into my own hands. I adopted the elimination diet where I cut out foods gradually to assess my HS triggers. I started by eliminating pork, then beef, then processed foods, then chicken, then dairy until I was a full-fledged vegan. After a year, I noticed a reduction in inflammation. The reoccurring boils stopped and some of the sinus tracts began to heal. After two years, the sinus tracts and scarring underneath my breasts had completely disappeared, and I was 100 pounds lighter.

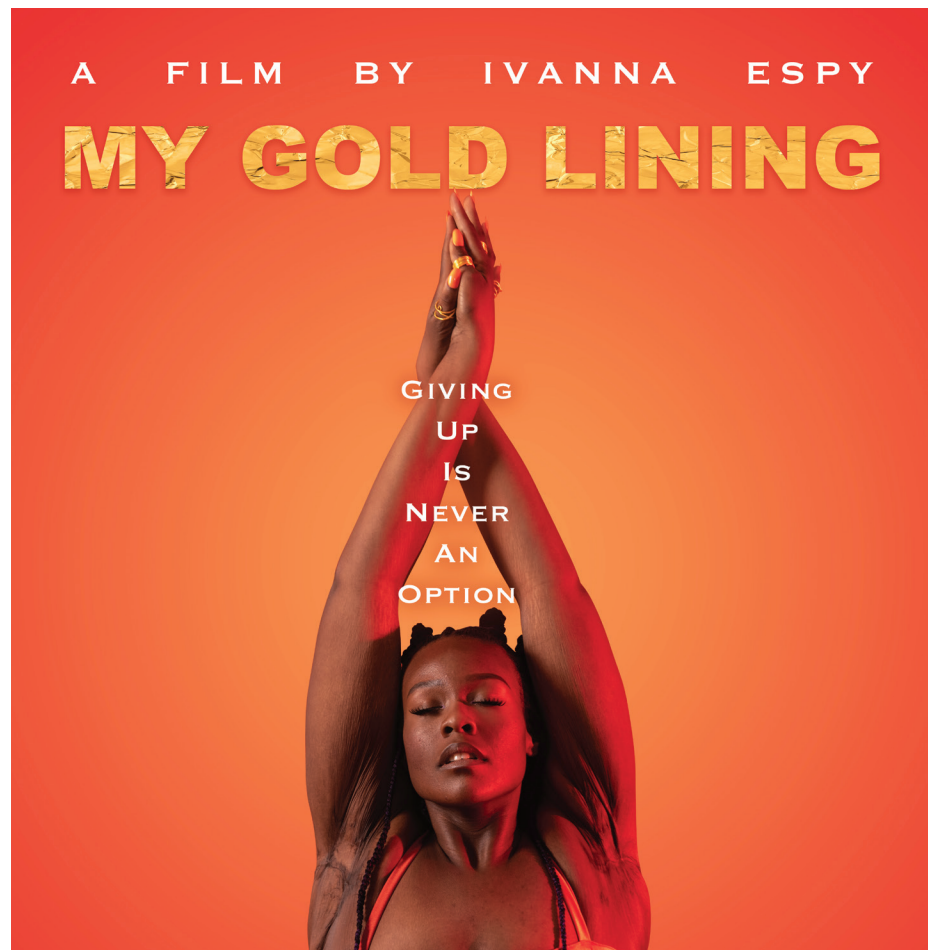
Because the inflammation was under control, I was now a great candidate for plastic surgery. Dr. Hamzavi and his team used a carbon dioxide

laser to gradually cut the diseased tissue caused by HS out of my body. Around this time, I joined online support groups, connecting with patients to help curb my isolation and shame.

For years I'd read countless stories of misdiagnoses, medical trauma and failed treatments until one day I was fed up – with suffering and seeing thousands of other people suffering, too. So, I set out to produce and direct a documentary on hidradenitis suppurativa. Not only did I address the condition from the clinical side, but I incorporated my story into the project. I also got to know and feature Maryland-based beauty influencer Antonia Jannee, whose journey is similar to my own. Thus, *My Gold Lining: A Documentary on Hidradenitis Suppurativa* was born.

Initially, I was fearful about releasing the documentary because it is a very intimate look into my reality and the experiences of patients across the world. I had to do the community justice. I longed to start a conversation and attract funding for more research and treatment.

Questions whirled around my head. What would people think of me now? Would they stop loving me? Would my dating life suffer?



After hosting a screening in Los Angeles at Sony Pictures Entertainment and one at NextWave Media Lab in Detroit, attendees used words like "brave," "beautiful" and "educational" to describe what they'd seen. I thought my experience would be invalidated when, in fact, it was embraced with love. I would do it all over again, for the freedom and just to reread the comments and messages I've received from HS patients elated to see themselves and their experiences represented in film.

The goal now is to organize a social impact screening tour, where the documentary is screened in select cities around the world for HS patients, their families and friends, and the general population. As I continue to screen the film, I hope it offers healing and freedom for patients by encouraging them to tell their stories. I want patients to see that the world does care and that the only barrier to their understanding is ignorance, and the cure to ignorance is education. **B**

For updates on *My Gold Lining: A Documentary on Hidradenitis Suppurativa*, follow @whoisivanna on Instagram and Ivanna Espy on Facebook.

When Talking Interracial Relationships, We're Down for the Swirl When it's Good for the Black Girl



BY DESIREE COOPER

More than a decade ago, I was having dinner with a dear friend who is white. We were talking about our hopes for our eldest children, including dreaming about their perfect mates. "I hope my son finds a nice black girl who really wants something in life and who shares his interests," I began. But she stopped me.

"Wait a minute. What if he finds the perfect girl, but she's not black?" I gulped, then gave her my honest opinion. "Of course, I'd accept whoever he chose to marry if they were a good match," I said. "But all things equal, I rather his mate – male, female, Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist – be black."

"That's interesting," she said, miffed. "I would be honored if my daughter married outside of her race." I've thought about that conversation a million times since. Why was I – a progressive, reasonably tolerant supporter of diversity – balking at the thought of my son (in particular) having an interracial marriage?

It would be a long time before I got to the bottom of my feelings. The truth was that my white friend never worried about whether her children hated themselves because they were white. But self-hatred has been my constant concern since the day my children were born, and I tried to do everything as a parent to reinforce their racial self-esteem. If my firstborn "married out," I would always wonder whether, despite our efforts, he still managed to

internalize racism against his own.

It's long been true among people of color in the United States, especially men, that the brass ring was the busty blonde. The examples are legions of black men parading white women on their arms as they "step up" in this nation's insidious racial and social hierarchy. The same has not been true for black women, who are devalued by white standards and have historically lacked any real opportunities to marry out.

Near the beginning of the last

decade, I did not find them attractive, where did that leave black women? In the lurch, that's where.

Even as I embraced diversity in all other aspects of life, interracial relationships didn't seem to further the cause of racial equality. Instead, the one-way direction of interracial marriage – black men marrying white women – reinforced the racial stereotype of the undesirable black female. As a black mother, I worried that my son would marry out, and my daughter would never marry at all.

pared with 12% of newly married black women – a slight uptick for both groups. But I'm not sure that statistic reflects the seismic change in the new visibility of relationships between black women and white men. Tennis great Serena Williams, popular television characters Olivia Pope and Annalise Keating, even in Buckingham Palace, the ancestral home of white privilege, black women are swirling everywhere.

If my friend and I were having that conversation now, I'm not sure I would have the same response

"If my firstborn 'married out,' I would always wonder whether, despite our efforts, he still managed to internalize racism against his own."

decade, Pew Research Center found that 22% of all black male newlyweds in 2008 married outside their race, compared with just 9% of black female newlyweds. Among Asians, the pattern runs the other way. About 40% of Asian female newlyweds married outside their race in 2008, compared with just 20% of Asian male newlyweds. It's hard to determine who is at the bottom of the marriage scale, black women or Asian men.

And so, we entered the last decade in a bit of a quandary for the race. If black men were not choosing black women as their mates, and men of other races

In her 2018 book, *Interracial Relationships Between Black Women and White Men*, Northwestern University sociologist Cheryl Y. Ju-dice urges black women to actively consider intermarriage. "I have a message to black women," she told PBS Chicago last year. "Please do not limit your search to only eligible black men. Be open to dating outside of the race."

Slowly, it seems that black women are not only willing but able to take her advice. In 2015, Pew Research reported that 24% of recently married black men were intermarried (a quarter of black, male newlyweds!), com-

to the question of interracial marriage. As it turns out, both of my children chose black mates, and two of her three children have married out. But my reticence was never about race-mixing; it was about sexual racism.

When swirling only happens in one direction, it reinforces racial and sexual stereotypes instead of breaking them down. The real measure of equality is when black women are also free to marry whoever they please. Maybe, at last, that day has come. **B**

DESIREE COOPER IS THE
AUTHOR OF *KNOW THE MOTHER*.

▶ Welcome to AARP Michigan's new leader in Metro Detroit

Brenda Price was appointed by AARP Michigan in January as Associate State Director for Community Outreach in Metro Detroit. She brings a wealth of experience in community engagement and organizing, non-profit work, education and volunteer leadership.

She will be a regular contributor to BLAC Magazine in this space. Here is her introductory message to Metro Detroiters as an AARP staff person:

I am a life-long Detroiters, with deep roots in the community having served in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. I also attended Detroit Public Schools and participated in civic affairs since my youth. This provides for a broad network of relationships in Metro Detroit and a significant understanding of issues that impact Detroit residents, particularly those 50-plus years of age.

As a connector of people, resources, and opportunities, I want to further engage our AARP members in Detroit and introduce others to all that AARP has to offer. AARP is a catalyst for change, fostering everyday innovations in aging while disrupting what aging is expected to be. I am a disrupter, too, and welcome being part of AARP in Michigan.

I have served this community at the intersection of community, non-profit and education for over 20 years. I look forward to working with the members of AARP and too attracting and recruiting new members to engage in our many services and programs. We have programs in outreach, education and advocacy. We are about helping people 50-plus live their best lives.

As AARP Michigan Associate State Director, I will oversee education and outreach programs that the organization has offered in the Metro Detroit community over the years. These include programs, services and events such as: financial security, fraud prevention and caregiving workshops; voter engagement; veterans' events; age-friendly community work; the holiday toy drive, and the annual celebration of Grandparents Day.

I also plan to work with our outstanding team of volunteers to take AARP in new and exciting directions in the years to come.



BRENDA PRICE CAREER EXPERIENCE:

- The Alliance for the Great Lakes, volunteer and education director
- Democratic National Committee, regional organizer and presidential campaign organizer
- Marygrove College, Urban Fellow and Director, Office of Urban Leadership
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, program director
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, senior program officer, director African American Legacy Program
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Michigan, community and government affairs liaison
- Wayne County Executive Office, Executive Assistant
- Substitute teacher, Detroit Public Schools

THE SKIN ISSUE



BROWN BEAUTY

The idea that lighter skin is more beautiful, more palatable permeates within black America and beyond – measurable in systematic oppression and microaggressions. Recent years have seen a shift toward a celebration of darker complexions, but is the color bound to fade?

BY PARIS GILES

For a black kid coming of age in the late '90s and aughts,

busting through the door, tossing your backpack wherever and clicking on music videos was the after-school move. Shows like *Rap City* and *106 & Park* were the culture, a barometer of what was hot in hip-hop and a daily reminder of what we should covet – dreamy locales, flashy cars, fly outfits and beautiful girls.

I bopped along in my living room like everyone else, but something other than the music always penetrated my spirit. The vixens in these videos were almost exclusively cappuccino-colored or lighter, many a racially ambiguous barely beige.

I remember asking a friend once, “You ever notice that all the girls in these videos are light skinned?” My question lingered for a few moments; I hoped that it came across as nonchalant and offhanded as I’d intended it. I was curious what she thought, but I didn’t want to

let her know just how much it bothered me that our culture’s assemblage of desirability didn’t seem to include me at all.

Her response: “Hmm, I never noticed.” Latte-colored herself, of course she hadn’t. Why would she? As adolescents, we are certainly the stars of our stories, and just as I hadn’t noticed that those videos also never featured fat girls, I couldn’t expect her to notice something that made no never mind to her young life. She hadn’t lived my experiences or developed the same insecurities that I had.

I don’t remember exactly when it started, but my dark brown skin was a regular point of ridicule during my early years. In school and in the neighborhood, kids would tease me with names like “choco,” “burnt” and “blackie.” To one particularly clever little taunter, I was “Dark Vader.” I legit thought this was the actual name

of the *Star Wars* character for years. These barages would result in those deep from-the-soul, can’t-catch-your-breath ugly cries. Those kids would break my little heart. And these weren’t white kids. No, these were my people, barely out of diapers and already mentally mutilated.

My mother was compassionate and insistent that I was beautiful; my father was indignant. “She’s not even *that* dark,” I remember him saying one time.

I’d lie in bed some nights and silently pray to God and ask him to make me just two or three shades lighter. I didn’t need to be yellow, I’d barter, just not so brown. Painful memories that, even as I recall them as a 30-year-old woman, cause a lump to form in my throat and a tightness in my chest.

Like most little girls, I went through a serious Barbie doll phase from age 5 to about 10. I had ▶

BROWN BEAUTY

one Caboodle for all my hair ties and such and another for all my plastic girls' outfits. It may have been playtime, but it was certainly not a game. In 1980, Mattel introduced its first African American and Hispanic Barbies. When we'd go to Toys R Us and I was allowed to pick a doll, I'd always choose a Latina one. Even at that young age, I knew what I was doing and I felt guilty every time I'd forsake the sistas for one of the lighter-skinned chicas, but I wanted the prettiest one, and in my severely warped mind, that meant one with but a tinge of melanin.

By the time I reached high school, the teasing had stopped and, while an impending trip to Florida or all-day outing to Cedar Point brought with it some anxiety about how deep of a tan I could expect, I felt mostly comfortable in my skin – pretty, even.

There was a guy that I kind of liked who would flirt with me in that bothersome way that teenage boys do. My friend said she'd talk to him, get the intel and report back. The dispatch came in that evening over the phone. He thought I was cute, he liked me, but he did have one hang-up. "He said," my friend relayed, "'She's just so dark.'"

A familiar gut punch. Never mind that he was a beautiful black coffee color himself, far darker than me. But it wasn't his fault that he didn't want to be with someone who looked like him, and it wasn't my fault that I cared. After all, they did a deliberately meticulous, remarkably impressive number on us.

FADE TO BLACK

It's inarguable that colorism – discrimination based on skin tone, typically favoring lighter skin – in black America is a direct descendant of slavery and the result of a steady infiltration of our identity with Eurocentric standards of beauty that extend beyond skin color.

It's the brown elephant in our room that we only whisper about or, worse, pretend isn't there. A 2009 History.com article reads, "A strict hierarchy among slaves (from privileged house slaves and skilled artisans down to lowly field hands) helped keep them divided and less likely to organize against their masters."

That division was sometimes sewed along color lines, with lighter-skinned slaves being called upon for domestic work and dark-skinned slaves relegated to backbreaking field labor. Of course, enslaved Americans with lighter skin were often the result of the rape of bound black women by white enslavers and their sons.

As it was, one drop of black blood meant you were black and if you were born of a slave, so then were you. Until well into the 20th century, U.S. census takers were told that a person who was both black and white should be counted as black, "no matter how small the percentage of Negro blood," according to Pew Research Center data. The first U.S. census in 1790 only had three racial categories: free whites, all other free persons and slaves. "Free colored persons" was added in 1820 and "mulatto" wasn't added until 1850.

As Peter Kolchin describes in his book *American Slavery: 1619-1877*, some mixed-raced

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children of slaveowners were educated, or at least allowed to learn to read. Occasionally, an enslaver may have arranged an apprenticeship for his illegitimate son and freed him upon its completion, especially in the two decades following the American Revolution. Expertly program the machine and, before long, it no longer needs an operator – it runs itself.

The idea that brighter is better continued to pulse after slavery was abolished, with light-skinned affluent black societies that only procreated with other light-skinned blacks popping up all over post-Civil War America. Passing the infamous brown paper bag test was an admissions requirement at some of our most illustrious historically black colleges and universities, storied sororities and fraternities, and even churches.

In 2014, the University of San Francisco published a study titled "When an 'Educated' Black Man Becomes Lighter in the Mind's Eye: Evidence for a Skin Tone Memory Bias." In it, researchers were able to measure the effects of whether a black man is touted as "educated" or "ignorant" on how light or dark he is remembered to be.

Participants (students) were shown either the word "ignorant" or "educated" and then a photo of a black man's face. They were then shown six variations of the target's face (ranging from dark to light) and asked to correctly identify which photo they'd been shown just seconds before. The evidence supported the existence of "skin tone memory bias;" the same black man was more often and consistently recalled as lighter when contextualized as "educated."

Researchers suggest, "Black individuals who defy social stereotypes might not challenge social norms sufficiently but rather may be remembered as lighter, perpetuating status quo beliefs."

Data research published in 2018 by Harvard University assistant professor of sociology Ellis Monk determined color bias within the criminal justice system with respect to African Americans. Monk writes, "I find that skin tone is significantly associated with the probability of having been arrested and/or incarcerated, net of relevant controls. Further analyses using a sub-sample of whites, drawn from the same nationally representative survey, show that disparities in policing and punishment within the black population along the color continuum are often comparable to – or even exceed – disparities between blacks and whites as a whole."

And multiple studies suggest a correlation between skin tone and the ease of dating and marriage. Evidence suggests that lighter-skinned lovers are more likely to marry, to marry sooner and to have spouses of higher social status. Specifically, a 2009 study of 329 young black women published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* found that light skin could account for an approximately 15% greater probability of marriage.

None of this to say that our melanin-scarce brothers and sisters don't face their own unique set of challenges, within the community and beyond. Some light-skinned black folk, especially those of mixed race, detail feelings of rejection by the culture, of not quite being "black enough," and some lighter-hued women may feel tokenized or placed on a pedestal upon which anything less than perfection



is not allowed.

We must be careful not to adopt an us-versus-them attitude that only perpetuates the House Negro vs. Field Negro mentality, nor should we settle for an us-versus-white-folk fight. Instead, rage against the machine.

A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM

Black Americans aren't special. Colorism is a peculiar brand of friendly fire that disrupts communities of color all over. The whole world is whitewashed and, consciously or unconsciously, apt to endorse European ideas of beauty.

East Asians are getting double-eyelid surgery, or cosmetic blepharoplasty, to add the upper crease typically absent naturally. Skin bleaching creams boom in countries like China and Malaysia, in Caribbean nations like Jamaica, and in African territories like Nigeria and Togo.

Infant and child trafficking facilitated by gangs and illegal adoption agencies is a huge problem in India, with light-skinned babies being favored and sold for the highest prices. In 2016, the BBC reported on an operation in the Eastern city of Kolkata. Authorities busted up the ring, rescuing 10 dark-skinned baby girls being kept in horrible conditions from a room above a house for the mentally ill; traffickers found them difficult to sell. Some were found chained and malnourished with coughs and terrible bed sores – they also found the skeletal remains of long-dead babies buried in the backyard.

Musician and *Love & Hip-Hop* regular Amara La Negra made waves a couple years ago when she started to speak out about the colorism she says she's experienced as an up-and-coming artist. The espresso-colored Afro-Latina has highlighted the overt preference for light skin within the Latin community, particularly in the entertainment industry, and recounted criticisms of her dark skin and implorations to tame her wild 'fro. The singer's mother is from

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the Dominican Republic and immigrated to the United States through the Mexican border.

"Here's a classic one," La Negra told HuffPost in 2019. "People consider me to be physically attractive, and I get the, 'Oh my God, you're a pretty black girl,' or 'For being black, you're really pretty.' I went to do an audition for a soap opera, and they told me, 'You're probably not going to get that role because they want someone who looks more Latina.'"

Beyonce's dad, Mathew Knowles, credits some of his daughter's tremendous success and worldwide acceptance to her digestibly fair skin tone – and, on the flipside, the elder Knowles thinks bandmate Kelly Rowland's dark skin hurt her. Not to detract from Mrs. Carter's talent, but the reaction from the black community was a collective, "Uh, duh."

In a 2019 SiriusXM interview, Dad said, in part, "Programmers, especially at pop radio, have this imagery of what beauty looks like. ... If you look back even at Whitney Houston, if you

look at those photos, how they lightened her to make her look lighter-complexioned. ... There's a perception all around the world about color – even with black folks, there's a perception."

In 2019, The Guardian offered a series – *Shades of Black* – on colorism within the black community, exploring various themes related to the topic. Netflix's *She's Gotta Have It* actress DeWanda Wise penned a piece for the collection, "From Overlooked Extra to Spike Lee Star: How I Beat Hollywood's Colorism." In it, the mocha-colored beauty chronicled how after years of being offered stereotypical black girl roles like prostitutes, criminals and drug addicts, she caught Spike Lee's eye.

She writes, "As an actor, I often see it during casting calls. I have had experiences where it was clear they wanted my vibe, but not my skin tone." She says she got to a point where she wanted to be the leading lady, "someone considered attractive and intelligent." Wise co-produced a movie, *How to Tell You're a Douchebag*, which made waves at Sundance and garnered the industry's attention – and Lee's.

"If it weren't for him insisting on someone of my complexion, I wouldn't be here. It's definitely a team sport: It takes allies and people in the industry to see you how you see yourself to make it work," she writes.

There's still work to do, but black bodies and minds of all types are more frequently and authentically represented in our cultural landmarks. That matters and dialogue helps, but the sad truth is that there is no cheat code for overcoming colorism. Only time will tell whether this shift will stick and continue to move us away from the sins of the past or whether we'll revert to our learned behaviors. These are deep wounds, and some of these scars just may be permanent.

I cannot recall, in recent years, feeling like my dark skin has been a hinderance. For me, it's a badge of honor and a source of great pride, and I've learned to love it with a fierce passion. And I can feel that attitudes have been amended, coalescing and coinciding with the most recent natural hair movement.

Instead of snide comments, it's compliments from women and "hey, chocolate" from guys. Some dark-skinned gals don't appreciate this last one because it can feel like fetishization, but compared to "Dark Vader," I'll take it.

The hate is still often there lurking in the background, I'm sure, but now I refuse to give it energy; I just don't care whether my melanin offends you. **B**

PARIS GILES IS BLAC DETROIT'S
SENIOR EDITOR.

THE SKIN ISSUE



Healing TOUCH



Humans need physical touch. A solid squeeze has the power to lift your spirits and lower your blood pressure. Once thought as something only to be shared between lovers and friends, some have stepped up to provide this basic need to those who desire it while making a few extra bucks themselves. Freelancer Darralynn Hutson spent time with a professional cuddler then jumped in herself, arms first. BY DARRALYNN HUTSON



I waited patiently as my cuddler put on a CD – a mixture of old R&B and jazzy soul. She lit a thick orange candle and asked if I wanted to cuddle in bed or on the couch. I quickly chose the couch with a sigh of relief. After all, this was my first experience and I didn't know what to expect. I questioned whether I should hire a man or a woman but, in full transparency, I knew only a big momma-type could satisfy my need for a great big ol' hug. That's what she did. I found her on a professional cuddling Facebook page; her name was Ma Dear – "blk woman, late 60s, teddy bear type."

I was sold. We exchanged numbers after I paid the initial one-hour minimum fee and we spoke about what was expected in our cuddle exchange. When I arrived, her barking dog greeted me at the front door. It was a modest home with Christmas lights still adorning the door – not what I'd expect from a professional cuddler, though, I didn't really have any expectations other than an hour-long warm and fuzzy feeling.

Hugging has gone out of fashion. Even before greedy politicians, manipulative R&B singers and sleazy Hollywood honchos started exposing their horrid secrets, cuddling was kept behind closed doors and used as an appetizer to love making. Professional cuddling has since become a viable career path for some.

SNUGGLE SCIENCE

WebMD experts suggest that when you cuddle with someone you care about, your body releases a hormone called oxytocin that calms you and makes you better able to deal with stress. It can also lower your blood pressure and lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Professional cuddlers like Ma Dear understand that the body needs to be cuddled, and they take full advantage of that need.

"Most times we forget that the body is wrapped in this organ called skin. This organ must be nurtured, coddled, touched," explains sexologist and Detroit native Frenchie Davis. "When we deny the need of this organ, we socially-emotionally endanger ourselves. The body needs the human touch. There are certain times of the year like 'cuddling season' that this fever for touch is more insistent." Davis adds, "Seasonal depression is very common during ►

Neeling TOUCH

the colder, darker seasons. So, we have to love on ourselves, give ourselves the touch it needs and deserves. And it's important to remember that touch is a necessity, not a desire. Hugging, touching, sexing are cures for mild depression. We increase our oxytocin levels with the gentlest touch. Allow yourself that happiness – skin hunger is real. Feed your skin, you feed your soul – just feed it with the right things.”

In the student dorms at Spelman College where I went to school in the '90s, girlfriends regularly hung out in their rooms lying on each other's beds, sometimes offering hugs to console depression or breakups or offering back rubs after long study sessions. Sometimes that led to something more, physically, but more often than otherwise, the touching and cuddling were platonic. This was, of course, long before the #MeToo movement. I don't remember anyone of my dormmates expressing concern about body boundaries.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Now I live in Detroit and it's not such a warm and fuzzy city, and 2020 isn't a particularly warm and fuzzy time – and women, especially, are highly conscious of boundaries. If you're looking for a professional cuddler, the internet is still the best place to start. According to the parameters established by cuddling websites like Cuddle-Connect.com or CuddleComfort.com, nothing happens that both people don't agree to in advance. Professional cuddling isn't sex work.

While with Ma Dear, I found that she was able to set the mood and the tone of our one-hour session. We just sat, faced each other on her burgundy-colored couch and embraced in a hug. Or, maybe, I was being hugged. I talked first, saying that I wanted to be let loose. Then we sat back on a couch pillow and she pulled me into a spooning hug, which at first felt forceful. I needed the nudge to relax. This was the position that we sat in for what seemed like forever. There was only soft music playing in the background and her breathing. It was quiet and comforting.

After a few minutes, I closed my eyes but was jolted by a buzzing iPhone. It was mine. She reminded me to shut my phone off. It was the first time I'd heard her voice since we'd sat down, and I was curious about her life and how she'd become a cuddler. I peeked at the time – 23

“THIS WILL ALWAYS BE A SAFE SPACE FOR YOU. I KNOW
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more minutes. I sank back into her cuddle, putting my legs up and letting my feet hang over the edge of the couch. This was starting to feel good, engulfed in the heat of her 250-pound frame. I asked her to tell me her story.

A mother of four, she came upon an advertisement in Detroit Metro Times looking for women interested in being a cuddler. She called the number and worked with a woman who was starting a local service. When I asked Ma Dear what she was making when she started her body tensed, and I stopped asking questions to listen to the quiet again. In the silence, I looked around her home which was obviously once-filled with kids that have long moved out. I can imagine that Ma Dear had been cuddling people on that burgundy couch for years before ever being paid for it.

I took it all in and thought that when I got my first client, I'd make them feel this way. Safe and comfortable. “This will always be a safe space for you,” says Ma Dear. “I know that you're not getting hugged and cuddled like you need to, so whenever you need me, I'm here.”

FOLLOW THE LEADER

When our session was over, I was even more motivated to search for the perfect cuddling partner for me, first going through the certification needed to solicit cuddle buddies, then creating just the right advertisement for the service I was providing. My first ad on CuddleComfort.com simply read “First time cuddler hoping to a warm experience.” For many days, there were no responses. Then there was one. An older man in Dearborn, mid-50s and retired. I immediately responded wanting to get it over with, and we scheduled time later in the day to talk. I must admit, this part of the cuddle process can feel a lot like romantic dating, what with questions to your potential

cuddle buddy about his profession, need for companionship and ability to finance our meetings. Ed (not his real name) knew exactly what he wanted, and that was affection.

I first declined his offer to meet when it became apparent that he didn't understand what professional cuddling was all about. He didn't understand that cuddling wasn't meant to be sexual in any way but rather a way to feed a human need for touch. I explained that, in my research, cuddling can calm stress, derail depression and curve anxiety. Ed understood and persisted in meeting me, feeling that we had made a connection – and I conceded.

We agreed to a public meeting. I set a price of \$60 for an hour and decided to meet at AMC Star Southfield to catch a matinee. We both felt it was a perfect place to hug and still feel safe. Ed looked exactly like his picture and greeted me with a long hug. He took out three \$20-dollar bills and placed them in my hand, which immediately made me feel cheap. Had I charged enough? We decided not to go to a movie but to instead just sit at a booth inside of a Mexican restaurant, leaning on each other as if we'd been friends for years. Ed was what we'd call touchy-feely, but I didn't mind. After all, he had given me \$60. I figured I owed him some warmth.

After asking that I move into the booth next to him, he put his head on my shoulder and squeezed my waist. He stroked my hands as he told me about the flower shop that he owned with his family over 20 years ago, and I shared my dreams of being a world-famous author.

And when our time was over, we hugged again, this time a bit longer than the first – we felt connected. He left saying that it was one of the best hugs he'd ever gotten. I had fulfilled the duties of my job. There might actually be something to this professional cuddling, after all. **B**

DARRALYNN HUTSON IS A DETROIT-BASED
FREELANCE WRITER.



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Ancestors By The Water's Edge (detail), 1989, Brenda Dendy Stroud, American; collage, mixed media, pen and ink. Maureen and Roy Roberts.

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THE SKIN ISSUE

Smooth OPERATOR

They grab our attention when we see them listed on product labels, but how much do we really know about the ins and outs – and dos and don'ts – of our favorite oils?

BY ARIANNA SMITH

Tea tree and sunflower and grapeseed. Am I at a Sephora or the grocery store? When it comes to skin care, there are so many “miracle oils” gaining buzz and clout online. A Google search for those terms will lead you down a rabbit hole of homemade remedies and countless expensive products – add “black” to your search criteria and you’ll be scrolling for a while.

Many of these oils get typecast into one role in the self-care saga when, really, they’re chameleons. Sure, almond oil is a great hydration serum, but did you know it also zaps stubborn stretch marks in the span of a few weeks? Oils derived from jojoba, coconut and avocado have a ton of lesser-known uses that’ll help you and your family slay the skin care game all year.

Coconut Oil



WHAT IT IS

The star of countless black women’s vanities for years, coconut oil is so beloved Lizzo named a song after it. Coconut oil is made from copra, the dried flesh of the fruit. Healthline says that coconuts and coconut oil are “naturally antifungal and high in lauric acid.” Lauric acid kills the nasty organisms thriving on your skin that can cause whiteheads and blackheads. It’s crazy versatile and has been used for everything by everybody, having been described as the “swiss army knife of plants.”

HOW IT HELPS

Coconut oil can do a lot to keep your black from cracking, especially if you suffer from dry skin or hair. Few things hydrate better than coconut oil. My mother used to dab it on my sister’s and my lips before taking us to school in the winter, and we never chapped or peeled.

It makes sense that a lot of African Americans love coconut oil. We’ve had history with the plant since slavery, when it was used as both a tool for sustenance and beauty. “When Africans were enslaved, their access to oils, herbs and hair tools was taken away. Enslaved Africans used whatever they could to maintain their hair and skin, and coconut oil came through,” writes Pan-African Alliance founder Asad Malik.

Coconut oil fell out of favor in the healthy cooking scene for its high fat content, but it continues to shine as a beauty product. The oil can tackle stretch marks and soothe dry patches and skin conditions. It’s been used as a shaving cream because it repels water and nourishes follicles. It can even lighten teeth and remove plaque from the gumline. If your baby ever picks up creepy crawlies from her friends at school, coconut oil will smother and kill lice or ringworm while also healing the scalp

and strands.

“Coconut oil is made for melanin! As black people we’ve been knowing how good it is for us. Rub it on and your skin immediately looks brighter,” writes Malik. “It really shines when you put it to work in your hair. For us, coconut oil is like a natural conditioner. It’s been with us since the beginning.”

WHAT NOT TO DO

Coconut oil is naturally antibacterial and incredibly hydrating, but it’s also highly comedogenic and will clog up pores like nobody’s business. Don’t use it too frequently, even in hair, and don’t leave large amounts of it on your face. Shea butter is a lighter alternative for your face and might make a better daily moisturizer if that’s the goal. Coconut oil also shouldn’t be used as a sunscreen by itself since it isn’t particularly effective at blocking UV rays or warding off hyperpigmentation. ▶

Smooth OPERATOR



Avocado Oil

WHAT IT IS

The oil of the avocado fruit is extracted from the flesh of the plant rather than the pit. It's yellow when it's refined and dark green when it isn't. The National Center for Biotechnology Information says that avocado oil is "incredibly high in vitamin E and antioxidants" and a less common allergen than other nut- and tree-based oils, meaning you're less likely to have any side effects or reactions after using it.

HOW IT HELPS

The men will like this one. Aside from avocado oil being a fantastic moisturizer, good for collagen and elasticity to keep skin plump and toned, it's great for beard and facial hair care. Avocado oil absorbs into follicles without dulling hair shine or making it gross and greasy.

William Stitt from Mr. Blackman's Backyard, a blog and hair care business all about "no-fuss grooming for the urban gent," says that avocado oil is uniquely suited to the challenges of taming ethnic hair on a day-to-day basis.

"Curly and afro hair is drier, thicker and rougher than Caucasian hair, which is what leads to

breakage," Stitt writes. "And if you're mixed race, it's a lottery what qualities your hair is going to have. Avocado oil manages those rough edges and reduces the frizz while the skin beneath is getting loved on."

Avocado oil naturally detangles and softens coarse strands. Men and women who struggle with razor burns and bumps might find relief with avocado oil. Using it as a moisturizer before and after shaving can prevent hairs from being snagged by blades and annoying the skin, leading to ingrown boils and itchy rashes.

"I add a few drops to my conditioner and beard balms. I forget that it's even working so well until I comb my beard and it's all smooth underneath and on top. There's nothing worse than scratching open a razor bump with a brush," Stitt writes.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Moderation is recommended with this oil, especially if it's being used on hair. Avocado oil is mildly comedogenic, meaning that its high fat content can cause breakouts in people with overly oily skin.



Jojoba Oil

WHAT IT IS

Jojoba oil, pronounced "ho-ho-ba," is extracted from the seeds of the plant of the same name, native to the Southwestern North American desert. According to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – the official botanic garden and arboretum of Texas – jojoba oil "does not degrade by bacterial activity," which means it has a really long shelf life, so it won't go bad in the pantry as quickly as other oils might.

It's almost identical in structure to sebum, the oil that human skin creates naturally to keep itself balanced and healthy. Because it's made from the seeds and not the roots or leaves, jojoba is classified as a carrier oil versus an essential oil, making it gentle enough to apply directly to the skin.

HOW IT HELPS

Adeola Adegbusi, natural hair and beauty blogger and founder of Coils & Glory, says that jojoba oil is a naturally hydrating substance with a "history in healing" that hasn't been fully realized by the media yet.

Adegbusi writes, "Native Americans extracted the oil from jojoba seeds to treat sores and wounds because it would heal them so fast. Of course, it hydrates your face and skin, but it can be used to do things like regrow cuticles and nails after infections, too. Jojoba energizes new skin so it can

turn over a new leaf."

Jojoba oil is also gaining attention for its purported use in fighting hair loss and clogged hair follicles caused by styling damage, medical conditions or just genetic bad luck.

Jojoba oil promotes keratin growth, the stuff that makes up your hair and nails, and has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties as well. It encourages the turnover of new cells, making it a natural treatment for issues like cradle cap and psoriasis that might affect infants and children.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Since jojoba oil is so close to the makeup of sebum, it absorbs better and doesn't have to be diluted before application like tea tree oil. It won't irritate or strip the skin. As with any oil, though, too much can clog your pores and cause problems. Adegbusi also says that due to the skin's natural day and night cycles, jojoba oil is best used when sleeping.

"Skin enters a repair mode at night," she writes. "It absorbs more and lets itself heal. During the day it's more defensive, you're sweating and moving, so you get shiny spots and oil slicks. If I used jojoba as a moisturizer, I wouldn't use it during the day depending on what skin type I have." Jojoba oil also can't be digested, so use something else to sauté that chicken breast.

Everybody's skin is different and may react to different oils in different ways. Whether you use these oils in their raw states or try out new products that feature them, before incorporating any new product into your routine, it's best test it out on a small patch of skin first. Any doubt? Consult your dermatologist. **B**

ARIANNA SMITH IS BLAC
DETROIT'S EDITORIAL INTERN.



Simisola Caxton-Idowu, M.D.

Why is it important to get a Pap screening?

When was the last time you had a Pap smear? Seeing your gynecologist regularly is important to maintaining your overall health. Pap smears (also called Pap tests) aid in early detection of cervical cancer, which is of particular importance to African American women.

"The Pap smear is different from the annual pelvic exam," says Simisola Caxton-Idowu, M.D., who specializes in Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) with Ascension Medical Group.

Dr. Caxton-Idowu says patients are sometimes confused between a Pap smear and a regular pelvic exam. The Pap smear allows detection of pre-cancerous cells. Although a speculum is used for both procedures, a Pap smear involves collecting cells from your cervix for examination, Dr. Caxton-

Idowu explains.

Why should you have this exam? "African American women are disproportionately affected by cervical cancer," Dr. Caxton-Idowu says. Although cervical cancer rates have declined nationwide, health disparities are still present. "African American women with cervical cancer are more likely to die," she adds.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), the death rate from cervical cancer in African American women is twice that of white women. One of the primary reasons cervical cancer affects African American women at higher rates is due to less frequent screenings, a University of Michigan School of Nursing study notes. Dr. Caxton-Idowu says that early detection of cancerous cells greatly improves the chances of successful treatment of cervical cancer.

"If you are seen regularly by a physician, and having Pap smears, hopefully cervical cancer is detected early," Dr. Caxton-Idowu says.

ACS also notes that women with early cervical cancers usually have no symptoms. Symptoms often do not begin until the cancer becomes larger and grows into nearby tissue. When this happens, some of the most common symptoms are abnormal vaginal bleeding, such as bleeding after vaginal sex, bleeding after menopause, bleeding and spotting between periods, or having (menstrual) periods that are longer or heavier than usual. Pain during sex is another symptom that needs to be investigated.

Recommendations for Pap tests have changed over the years. "You don't need a Pap every year, unless you have had an abnormal result," Dr. Caxton-Idowu says.

Dr. Caxton-Idowu recommends

that young women begin regular Pap testing at age 21, and between ages 21 to 30, women should have a Pap smear every three years. Women ages 30 to 65 years old who have had normal Pap exams can switch to screening with a combination of Pap smears and human papillomavirus (HPV) testing every five years.

"Depending on your history, we may stop screening at age 65," she says, emphasizing that you must have had adequate prior screening with no abnormal results before you can stop Pap screening.

"Come in and have a discussion with your physician about the importance of this screening," Dr. Caxton-Idowu says. "A well-informed patient is able to make better decisions. So reach out and make sure you have regular OB/GYN visits every year."

access

DETROIT | FEBRUARY 2020

Compiled by Arianna Smith

24 MONDAY
NICOLE BUS



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For a complete list of events,
visit our online calendar.

6 THURSDAY

EARTHGANG. The hip-hop duo stops in during their *Welcome to Mirrorland Tour* with special guests Mick Jenkins, Wynne and Jurdan Bryant. \$22.50-\$55.50. 7 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY. The iconic hip-hop group comes to town with special guest Trick-Trick. \$37-\$49. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com

7 FRIDAY

WINTER BLAST. Quicken Loans' annual event is back with live music, free ice skating, an ice garden, zip line rides, skiing and snowboarding demos and more. Free. 5-11 p.m. today, 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Feb. 8, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Feb. 9. Campus Martius Park and Cadillac Square, downtown Detroit. winterblast.com

SPOKEN. During *Spoken: The Art of Poetry*, area poets present works inspired by the pieces of art they love the most, featuring Sherina Sharpe, Micheal Sheldon and Nadine Marshall. Free with general admission. 6-9 p.m. today and Feb. 28. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dia.org

DIRTY SHOW. The international exhibition is back for its 20th year, featuring erotic art in all forms, from photography and illustration to performance and cinema. \$40-\$150. 7 p.m.-midnight today, Feb. 8, Feb. 14-15. Russell Exhibition Center, 1600 Clay St., Detroit. dirtydetroit.com



13 THURSDAY

DISNEY ON ICE. *Disney On Ice presents Road Trip Adventures* will whisk families away on an immersive getaway chock-full of magical participatory moments. \$13-\$62. Times vary today-Feb. 16. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

ARIES SPEARS AND TOMMY DAVIDSON. The comedic pair take the stage. \$33-\$46. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com

To list an event in ACCESS Detroit, send facts and photos two months prior to calendar@BLACdetroit.com. You also may upload information to BLACdetroit.com/Calendar or mail to Metro Parent Media Group, BLAC Calendar, 22041 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, MI 48220. Submissions may be edited or omitted.

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MARCH
2 SATURDAY
KAMASI WASHINGTON

14 FRIDAY

TONI MORRISON AND JAMES BALDWIN. Celebrate the life and legacy of these literary giants with dramatic readings of their work that captured black life in America as it was actually lived. Free with general admission. 7 p.m. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dia.org

VALENTINE'S SOUL JAM. R&B soul stars The Whispers, The Dramatics, Russell Thompkins Jr. & The New Stylistics and Enchantment perform their greatest hits. \$59-\$125. 8 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

RAPSODY. The rapper brings her *A Black Woman Created This* tour to town. \$22.50-\$25. 8 p.m. The Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. majesticdetroit.com

NICOLE BYER. The actress, writer and comedian stops in to do stand-up. \$25-\$35. 10 p.m. Magic Stick, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. majesticdetroit.com

15 SATURDAY

FABULOUSLY FUNNY COMEDY FESTIVAL. Mike Epps, Haha Davis, Karlous Miller and Desi Banks stop through. \$59-\$125. 7 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

THE VINCENT CHANDLER EXPERIENCE. The trombonist leads this jazz concert featuring Dwight Adams on trumpet, Rafael Leafar on alto sax, DeSean Jones on tenor sax, Michael Malis on piano, Josef Deas on bass and Sean Dobbins on drums. \$10-\$20. 7 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

7 FRIDAY

WINTER BLAST



PLEASURE P. The singer brings his *My Pleasure Concert* to town. \$30-\$100. 8 p.m. El Club, 4114 W. Vernor Highway, Detroit. elclubdetroit.com

16 SUNDAY

DR. MOLEFI ASANTE. The chair and professor of Africology and African American studies at Temple University discusses "The Potential Power in the Conscious Black Vote," followed by a book signing. Free. 6 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

21 FRIDAY

MONICA BLAIRE. The eclectic singer-songwriter performs. Free with general admission. 7 p.m. Detroit Film Theatre, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dia.org

15 SATURDAY
FABULOUSLY FUNNY
COMEDY FESTIVAL



AFRO KARAOKE. DJ Renzay and other guests DJs spin Afrobeats, reggae and more for a night of dance karaoke and cultural vibes. \$10-\$15. 10:30 p.m. El Club, 4114 W. Vernor Highway, Detroit. elclubdetroit.com

22 SATURDAY

LIT AF TOUR. Martin Lawrence hosts this hilarious evening featuring Deray Davis, Lil Rel, Donnell Rawlings, Benji Brown and Clayton Thomas. \$45-\$150. 7:30 p.m. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

23 SUNDAY

LIL TJAY. The Bronx-born rapper takes the stage. \$27.50-\$58.50. 8 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

24 MONDAY

NICOLE BUS. The "You" singer stops in with special guest Tone Stith. \$18-\$38. 7:30 p.m. The Shelter, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

26 WEDNESDAY

THE GRISELDA TOUR. Westside Gunn, Conway the Machine and Benny The Butcher stop through. \$23-\$88. 8:30 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

28 FRIDAY

AUTORAMA. This 68th annual hot rod showcase roars into town. \$7-\$21. noon-10 p.m. today, 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Feb. 29, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. March 1. TCF Center, 1 Washington Blvd., Detroit. autorama.com

7 FRIDAY
DIRTY SHOW



GABRIEL IGLESIAS. The comedian stops in on his *Beyond the Fluffy* tour. \$50-\$85. 7 p.m. Masonic Temple, 500 Temple Ave., Detroit. themasonic.com

29 SATURDAY

MICHIGAN FASHION WEEK. Join the week's main international couture showcase featuring over 700 fashion designers, bloggers, stylists and enthusiasts. \$22-\$75. 5-10 p.m. Masonic Temple, 500 Temple St., Detroit. michiganfashionweek.com

1 SUNDAY

WE WANT OUR BODIES BACK. Poet and author Jessica Care Moore kicks off her book tour for *We Want Our Bodies Back*, her fifth collection of poems, featuring Rochelle Riley and Moore in conversation, live art by Sabrina Nelson and more. \$25. 4 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

2 MONDAY

KAMASI WASHINGTON. The jazz saxophonist takes the stage. \$29.50-\$89.50. 7 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

5 THURSDAY

MORRIS DAY & THE TIME. The icons take the stage. \$38-\$50. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com **B**

Wayne State University's Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Tribute Luncheon

On Tuesday, Jan. 21, WSU invited the community to the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center in Detroit to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sociopolitical comedian W. Kamau Bell served as the featured guest during the program and luncheon.

Photos by Sydney Kispert-Bostick



Lisa Whitmore Davis, Tonya Matthews



Theresa Bennett, Pamela Galloway



Angela Polk, Kathy Lindsey



Harmony Rhodes, Jamal Robertson,
Chloe Kinsey



Andre Murrie



Angela Wade, Ann-Marie Morris



DeeDee McKinney, Odom Michael Perkins,
Amina Bell



Theron Logan, Melaney Goosby, Denzel Palm



Reggie Armstrong

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CRANBROOK SCHOOLS SUMMER CAMPS

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SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE KIDS ON CAMPUS

SHERMAN LAKE YMCA CAMP

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SUMMER IMPRESSIONS DAY CAMP

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