
By Cathy Howse

Traditional methodology with a different twist

Being a woman in the industry, Lisa has an advantage that was not evident in any of the books written by men. I liked how she told you who she was and summarized her experience. As with every industry professional book I learn what the author knows and what they tell their clients, as well as traditional methods passed down for decades. In her introduction and final chapter I applaud her as she reprimands the cosmetology industry for the negligent behavior of lumping all hair care under one cosmetology license. The positive affirmation approach throughout the book is nice but almost akin to preaching to an atheist if you are not into the “positive attitude” way of thinking. The book cover claims it will “teach me how to care for my hair to grow to its maximum length.” Since my experience is on hair growth I focused on Lisa’s “Program” chapter, although her hair care message appears to be seeded throughout the book. Lisa states, “as your attitude toward your hair improves your hair will improve.” Improving our hair is a requirement for growing it, however, a positive attitude is NOT a requirement for hair growth.

Throughout the book Lisa focuses on the scalp. You are instructed in her “Program” to apply oil to the scalp. She recommends shampooing two to three times as well as multiple applications of conditioner in one setting, to remedy what she calls a “scalp problem.” I have never followed nor do I ever intend to follow this practice even though I occasionally have an itchy scalp and sometimes flakes, because I know this condition is not associated with a “degree of scalp damage” as she repeatedly states in her book. Scalp treatments are “traditional” methods that have not worked in the past. One of the reasons we have so many problems with our scalp is because of what we put on it. The scalp is NOT the problem when it comes to us growing longer hair. Lisa references hair vitamins throughout the book but never explains why they are needed (which explains the reason for her hair vitamin hairdressing product). Her program recommends you apply vitamin hairdressing on the hair and scalp. Since hair is not alive but dead I know that vitamins provide no real benefit to the hair externally as far as helping grow it. In order for vitamins to help grow the hair the body must synthesize them internally. Since no other race of people note severe scalp problems but African American people, we truly have to believe that scalp problems come from things we put on our scalp. On page 32 Lisa says, “….oils requirements is needed when the hair looks dull or the scalp is dry or flaky.” According to my studies of our hair, Type 4 hair needs oil internally for lubrication and laying it on the surface for “luster” is NOT a requirement. On page 35, Lisa says “….the average white person has relatively straight hair and pretty normal amount of active oil flowing from her scalp.” In the next paragraph she goes on to say, “….the average black woman….and the scalp does not appear to have the same flow of oils.” Once
Black Woman’s Guide to Beautiful Hair  A review by Cathy Howse

again I interject to say the SCALP IS NOT THE PROBLEM! The curl pattern of the hair makes our hair very dry and this has nothing to do with any “flow of oil.” Consider this: if straight hair on the Caucasian head gets more “flowing oil” how do you explain dark biracial individuals with straight hair, or African-Americans who have straight hair biologically, or Caucasians with excessively curly hair? Caucasian hair has a straight pattern, which makes it not as dry as African American Type 4 hair. When I straighten my Type 4 hair it too is not as dry, even though a chemical has been applied. The problem does not come from having Black skin. Caucasians can often have the same texture hair we have and still experience dry hair problems thus disproving Lisa’s “oil flow” theory. Lisa is not the only “professional” that uses this theory to explain our dry hair, it is pretty much an industry wide philosophy that is flawed and without merit. This book focuses an entire chapter on the scalp insisting it is a requirement for growing Black hair longer. However, our real hair growth problems are NOT scalp related. I have had scalp sores from chemical burns time after time that never affected my ability to lengthen my hair.

The use of traditional methodology for our hair is the reason we don’t have hair today. Repackaging “traditional methodology” as this book does is really NOT the answer to growing longer hair on African-American heads.