

I am 24 with sides (tamar). Having sides and a semi-full hair line is somewhat a badge of honor in the black community. The quickest way for a woman to insult another is to talk about her sides. Although I have never in my life worn a full weave, I am a black woman who for most of her life has had her natural hair hidden with braids. Ironically, people call women who wear braids natural sistas, even if the braids we wear graze our booties. Im not saying that black women cant and dont grow waist length hair, but with the hot, dry temperatures of west africa where our ancestors are largely from, hair could be a liability more than an asset. I never really thought about all the years of wearing braids as being a coverup necessarily for my own thick, nappy, coarse full head of hair. I always like the intricate designs possible with braids and I liked even more the tall, lithe, senegalese women who I sought to braid my hair. So regal they are with the twisted, crocthed hair styles. African-women wear braids and change their hairstyles like it is in their dna. Sometimes I think African-American women, on the other hand wear braids to have the look and style possiblitiies of long hair.

This brings me to the ever changing conversation and historical significance of black hair. Black hair is amazing--it can be braided, twisted, shaven, locked, nubian knotted; parted, slicked. It is nappy, wavy, curly, wavy-curly, straight and everything in between. Black people love and hate our hair at the same time. Noone wants bone stratight hair like the white people but noone wants fist nappy hair that puts a up fight every morning either. Most of us--Black women and black men want something we can manage. Which is why styling black hair can be a political decision just like deciding who to vote for.....

Accoring to Mintel, Black consumers spend a whopping \$2.56 million dollars on hair care products in 2016, and more and more of that is on natural hair products created presumably with the textures and chemistry of African-American hair types in mind.

This shift in attitudes toward an acceptance of more natural and less processed African-American hairstyles, and a greater number of braiders looking to Africa for braided cornrow and french braid styles that use less and less synthetic hair intrigued me to to research the ever changing perception of black hair.