

# Combination of Afro and Process hair styles produces "Freedom Look"

Hairstyles for Black men and women have undergone some dramatic changes in the last 10 years.

During the turbulent 1960s Black people gained a new identity which accentuated their African heritage.

One physical change that a good number of Black men and women made was to change their hairstyle to what later became known as the "Afro."

The Afro or natural look was an attempt to develop a physical identity with native Africans--the cousins of American Blacks.

Many Black men used what is known as a "process" to straighten their hair to assimilate into White society, prior to the advent of the Afro.

The process did more damage than good, according to Al Guard, of Springfield, Ill., a barber.

"As early as the late 1920s, Black men in an effort to duplicate White hair styles began to use alkaline and acid-base substance to straighten their hair," Guard said. "Some mixed the chemicals on their own and produces some drastic results."

Those results in some cases injured the person's scalp, destroyed the hair or caused permanent baldness.

The layman used a combination of soap, grease, lye and potato peelings to process his hair.

This homemade method left a lot to be desired, according to Guard, and a number of Black men today still carry the marks of their first process or "konk" as it was known in the 1940s.

From the middle 1960s to about 1972, the Afro remained the dominant hair style among young Blacks and some older Blacks.

But with the release of the movie, "Superfly," young Black men began to copy the hairstyle of the star of the film, Ron O'Neal, according to Guard.

O'Neal's hair was long and straight but the reason for straightening the hair was different this time. The "Superfly" was a sign of Black male virility and intellectual and physical ability.

Guard said, the "Superfly" look was the result of hero identity--the super Black man.



the person's hair is not healthy, the chemical processing will not be performed, Guard said.

The first step of the treatment involves placing a layer of base, a grease-like substance, on the scalp to protect it from any chemical burns.

Next, the hair relaxer is combed through the hair until the hair's natural curl disappears.

Guard said that once the hair is straightened, several conditioners must be put on the hair to keep it healthy.

He said the sodium hydroxide in the hair relaxer strips the hair of all its natural oils and protein during the straightening process.

The hair is rinsed and put on rollers or pre-ma- rods (perma-rods give a smoother look), and allowed to dry for 45 minutes.

After the hair is dry it can be combed into the desired style, according to Guard.

All of this process costs between \$15 and \$20 which makes some young Black men think twice before going to the freedom look.

Guard said he is not quite sure where the hairstyle changes will end but he did say that the trend is toward shorter hair.

With the emergence of more Black actors and popular Black male singing stars, young Black males had other images with which to identify.

But as would be expected, the Afro and process have been combined to give us another hairstyle --the "freedom look" or "curly Afro." Depending on what you want you can either have a lot of curl in your Afro or you can have less curl and more wave.

Guard checks the condition of a person's hair before performing any process. He said this helps determine the strength of the hair relaxer he uses.

The hair is analyzed with a microscope which magnifies a hair root extracted from the scalp. If

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