

Black women trying cosmetic surgery

By Shaena Henry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Rachel (not her real name) has always committed herself to living a healthy lifestyle. She is a vegetarian, watches her diet closely, and can be found in the gym daily. However, after a myectomy and endometriosis Rachel noticed excess weight in her midsection.

"I started developing this stomach that I did not have before," said Rachel, who asked to conceal her identity because of stigmas associated with cosmetic surgery. "I could see if I did not exercise and was overweight. It looked [as] though I was pregnant."

After years of camouflaging her stomach, Rachel decided to research surgical options to free her from the discomfort of accentuating her abdominal area. Her hair stylist referred her to Dr. Sheila Bond, a northern-New Jersey-based board certified plastic surgeon. Last year, Rachel put up more than \$6,000 for abdominoplasty and liposuction.

Bond schedules one-on-one interviews prior to the surgery and a personalized treatment plan after the procedure to achieve the best results. Bond said that Rachel joins the growing number of African-American women who no longer fear the stigma

or shame associated with cosmetic surgery.

"African-American women are at a different socioeconomic status than in the past and they want to look good," Bond said. "They are living longer and don't want to look old if they don't have to."

In 2005, African-Americans accounted for more than 760,000 cosmetic procedures performed, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. The report states that the most commonly requested cosmetic procedures by African-Americans are rhinoplasty (nose reshaping), liposuction, and breast reduction, which raises the question of patients attempting to erase the broader noses and curvier silhouettes associated with their ethnicities.

Doctors say that African-American women store more fat in the breasts and buttocks than women of other races, and liposuction is an effective resolution. Bond said that African-American women requesting nasal reshaping to alter their ethnicities is a thing of the past.

"People are very proud of their ethnicities now and just want some improvement," Bond said. "When I do nasal reshaping, it's to refine it. Black women are very happy now with their bodies and themselves."

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Yet some believe that the Caucasian standard of beauty still influences African-American women today. Dr. Julia Hare, psychologist and founder of the Black Think Tank, said that cosmetic surgery is the alternative to skin bleaching creams and hair straightening products that plagued African-American women throughout the 1960s who were desperate for a more Nordic look.

"Many Black women are trying to achieve the White standard of beauty because many go to get the nose pointed. Whose standard is that?" Hare said. "The person getting it may see it as a self-improvement, but when you

really sit down with a therapist, then you find out where the self-hatred comes in."

In the 2005 documentary, "A Girl Like Me", director Kiri Davis interviews young African-American girls about the standards of beauty that have been forced on them by society and how it influences their self-image. She also directs the "doll test," originally conducted by Dr. Kenneth Clark for use in the case of Brown v. the Board of Education. Davis' test results showed that 15 out of 21 children preferred a White doll over a Black doll.

Hare said that African-American women who opt

for cosmetic surgery are communicating negative messages to young African-American girls like those in Davis' documentary.

"Black women who are very successful are sending another message out to a younger sister that 'I may have achieved, but I still don't look acceptable,'" Hare said.

According to the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, cosmetic and reconstructive surgery quadrupled among African-Americans between 1999 and 2001, which reflects the increase in disposable income and the gradual acceptance of cosmetic surgery in the African-American community.

However, Black men like Samuel Lacount, a 27-year-old resident of Atlanta, reject the idea of cosmetic surgery and believe that African-American women are pressured by the media to alter their bodies.

"I believe that Black women are trying to live up to the White standard of beauty when they have plastic surgery," Lacount said. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and no one should feel less beautiful because of what they see on television, print or the Internet."

Despite opposing views on cosmetic surgery, Rachel said that her decision was based on synchronizing her stomach with the rest of her body rather than conforming to society's standards of beauty. She encourages those considering cosmetic surgery to be satisfied with themselves mentally first.

"My life has not changed, but my confidence has changed with regards to my appearance," Rachel said. "I think it's a personal moment in your life and your self-esteem should be in your head already."

Shaena Henry writes for the Howard University News Service.

Your Horoscope Says... March 22-28

ARIES

You can fly through the week if you keep your level of cooperation high. By this week's end, you'll have many plans — romantic and otherwise — for the time period. Be patient at the workplace, and things will go fine.

Soul Affirmation: I will take it easy on myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 6, 43

TAURUS

You may feel as if you'll never get everything done that's asked of you, but stay steady and on course. Take things one step at a time, and you'll be amazed at what you accomplish. Celebrate with a special friend.

Soul Affirmation: This week is a gift that I deserve.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 20, 38

GEMINI

It's a great week for catching up on chores and leftover tasks from last week. You'll also have the opportunity to spend some time thinking about the direction you want your life to flow toward.

Soul Affirmation: I face each day with a smile, and the day smiles back at me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 8

CANCER

Communication vibes are highlighted, and you are in your element. Many ideas will be presented, and everyone will be very receptive and agreeable to what you say. Romantic interests are easily pursued this week. Smile on!

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my pace gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 49, 51

LEO

Love and romance vibes are all around you this week. They will soothe your spirit and uncoil your tensions resulting from having too much work to do. Delegate some of the minor tasks so that you can do your best at the big stuff. Have a loving, lovely week.

Soul Affirmation: New intuitions create new plans and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 5, 16

VIRGO

Financial matters are highlighted during working hours. Everything to do with your own money or with money under your care goes smoothly. Another party invitation arrives... say YES!

Soul Affirmation: I admit what I really want out of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 22, 36

LIBRA

Happiness with partners remains the order of the week. Relations between partners are exceptionally harmonious right now. You are in synch with loved ones. Much is being accomplished by your attitude. Don't overdo your physical workout.

Soul Affirmation: I master fear by knowing that all is well.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 19, 37

SCORPIO

The time has come to forgive and forget. A great big smile might be your best accessory this week. Take the first step in reconciling a friendship. You thought no one knew, but you may be romantically attracted to an old pal.

Soul Affirmation: Friendships are treasures I cherish.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 44, 54

SAGITTARIUS

If you are finding it hard to concentrate on a project at work, begin imagining it successfully completed. Work steady and stay calm this week. This week is a good time for personal inventory.

Soul Affirmation: I will take time to enjoy the simple things in life.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 33, 44

CAPRICORN

The mental fog lifts, and you are sharp as a tack, once again. You'll be making decisions about partnerships and joint finances. A very happy week is in store. Tests of patience are easy for you to win. Keep smiling while you wait.

Soul Affirmation: My smile is a radiant light to those I encounter.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 23, 41

AQUARIUS

Exercise prudence this week in your handling of personal funds. Let your mind wander into the future and you'll receive the happy answer that you are looking for. Time shared with a partner this week will be very enjoyable.

Soul Affirmation: Helping others is the true measure of my worth.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 15, 20

PISCES

Work with a partner or colleagues goes exceptionally well this week. You receive praise for a job well done! Feel free to change your mind regarding a personal issue. News from a distance arrives.

Soul Affirmation: I go inside myself to find peace and joy this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 16, 24

Nagin: Tragedy is still not over

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, declaring "the tragedy is still not over," has called on Black newspaper publishers to use the Hurricane Katrina disaster to expose racial motives in the slow progress in New Orleans and all of urban America.

"Keep the message going. Tell the story about what's really happening. Relate it back to what's going on in your community, and let's collectively come together and build a national agenda of what we need to do about urban cities," Nagin said.

"The tragedy is still not over. Katrina was one thing, but 1,700 people lost their lives. And now, in the city of New Orleans, because of the stress and the weight of broken promises, people are dying every day."

Nagin was speaking as the NewsMaker of the Year award winner during the 2007 Black Press Week celebration of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, a federation of 200 Black-owned newspapers.

NNPA Foundation Chairwoman Dorothy Leavell says Nagin was chosen as this year's top award winner, in part, because of the need for the Black Press, in its 180th year, to focus attention on social and economic injustices still prevalent in New Orleans and in cities across

(See Nagin, Page 12)