CT: I'm going to be in LA next week.

AP: She's on Facebook.

CT: Do you know her personally?

AP: Not really. We don't get along. She created this technique and she wanted it to be for home businesses. She doesn't like the idea of it being in salons because she feels she will lose control of it because she makes people pay for renewal of their registration as a Sisterlock tech. And she sues people throughout the country that use the technique and call it other names, so they have to pay her…

CT: Her name is JoAnne

AP: Dr. JoAnne Cornwell [laughing]

CT: Ok, I'll look her up, that would be great to find another…

AP: Yeah, I think she's kind of iconic. She's the first person who patented or trademarked a hairstyle and the tools and the name.

CT: That's fascinating.

[END]

Candacy Taylor 12/15/13 9:47 AM
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AP: You can buy it from like a crochet shop, but the one she has you have to get it from them. Did she have a little white one?

CT: Hmm mmm.

AP: Yeah. You have to get it from the Sister Locks people.

CT: They made it.

AP: Yes, they patented it.

CT: That's amazing. Is there anything you want to say about black hair? It's a huge trend now for black women to wear their natural hair. Oprah's next magazine cover will be her wearing natural hair.

AP: A lot of people are wondering if this is a trend, but I think it's an evolutionary process, people coming into enlightenment and realization about their own unique beauty, so I don't see it as a trend. I started in natural hair care business over three decades ago, some people thought it was a trend then and I support myself on that alone. So if it's a trend it was a very long trend [laughing]. And I only see it growing as people become more conscious about things like the environment, their diet, the planet…I think hair goes in line with that as well. The consciousness that you don't have to use chemicals to change your hair and look like the popular culture in order to be considered beautiful and acceptable, if to no one else, than to yourself.

CT: If anything it has grown in terms of acceptance. More people are wearing more natural styles. I did interview two women who do African styles and they kind of had an issue using the word, "natural," because they color their hair and there are things they do to it that aren't quite "natural."

AP: I think there are so many versions of what is natural, just like in food and cosmetics and everything and everybody has their own definition of what is natural. For some people's hair to be natural they don't do *anything* to it. That's one extreme. And then a step up from that is that you don't color it, you don't use any products to alter it. Then some people think if you have extensions, you're not natural, if you have a weave you're not natural, but your hair has not been processed so…It's just a matter where you put that.

CT: So how would you like me to describe your salon, Khamit Kinks?

AP: I consider it natural, because what we do is work with your natural hair and we work with it in the way that's best for you.

CT: What does "Khamit" mean?

AP: Khamit is the original name of the people who are now called Egyptians. That was the name before the Greeks changed it.

Candacy Taylor 12/15/13 10:04 AM
Deleted: , they were called Khamites {???}

CT: Ok, I'm learning a lot. Thank you. I really appreciate your time and thank you for making this happen.

AP: Thank you and you're welcome. I was thinking, you know it might be interesting for you to interview JoAnne. She's very much a character.

CT: Who is JoAnne ?

AP: She is the founder of the Sisterlocks technique. They have a cult following.

CT: Oh, where is she?

AP: She's in California.

CT: Where?

AP: I think LA, or San Francisco.

CT: And what about any other races?

AP: For a period, we were doing a lot of Japanese [laughing].

CT: Really?

AP: Yeah it was funny. What happened was that we ended up in a Japanese tour book about New York. It was so funny because the style they put in to represent our salon was a pixie, which was small, tiny single braids that come to hear [gestures] and they all came in with hair down to their waist wanting a pixie [laughing].

CT: What did you do? Did you cut off all their hair?

AP: No we convinced them to get a different style.

CT: So what did you do with their hair?

AP: They got longer styles. Long braids, or cornrows or something different.

CT: Is that still going on?

AP: No.

CT: Do you have a Japanese person come in and say they want dreads?

AP: Yeah, we have more of them, that those who want braids.

CT: How do you get Japanese hair to dread?

AP: It's the teasing. We also have Caucasian customers who come in for locks as well.

CT: Is there an issue between using the words "locks" versus "dreads"?

AP: Yeah, well dreads are supposed to be something that came from Jamaica, referring to style as "dreadful" because Jamaicans are very prim and proper there, you know they were colonized by the English, so in that counter culture it's dreadful [laughing]. "Locks" is more cosmopolitan, it's usually groomed and usually at a salon, "dread" is like freestyle, Bob Marley, let it do it's own thing.

CT: Thank you for that information. Can you talk about the process of interlocking and how that's different from twisting [locks]? It seems like he [the customer I photographed] comes in every six weeks and it's a two-hour process, and it's about $100? And what is the name of the tool that's used?

AP: Hmm mmm. The tool is called a latch hook, there might be another name for it but that's what we call it. There are tools more like a crotchet needle. The difference is in how it locks, how it looks, and how it holds up. But the palm rolling…if you happened to get caught in the rain or go jogging and you sweat a lot, that hair would unravel or loosen at the root, that twist would unloosen. With the interlock, it stays like that until the hair grows out.

CT: How old is this process?

AP: I think the Sisterlocks founder is the one who actually started it. I don't remember hearing of it before her. And she came up with it based on naval knotting techniques.

CT: Was this 10 years ago? 50 years ago?

AP: More like 20.

CT: I've never seen that before. It reminds me of yarn. Do you buy that tool at a beauty supply store?

do but I could never get to because I was behind the head. I made my business credit card-ready. So, I started taking credit cards. I got my business license. I did all these thing for my business and it made me realize that I could do more for my business not being behind a head. So when I was able to get the cast off and start working again, I had to work my way back up to my stamina and everything and I realized that I was really exhausted from doing hair and I didn't want to be doing hair forever. It takes a toll on my body. I was getting older. I had been doing hair for nearly 20 years, and I was kind of burnt out. I was like, *I can't stand behind another head.* And it was difficult because people who were used to you doing their hair, they have a relationship with you and they want you to keep doing it and I even had one customer who called and said that I was liar, and that if I didn't want to do her hair anymore all I had to do was just say it. She didn't appreciate me trying to refer her to one of my other stylists. I'm like "If you come in and see this cast on my hand and you can see that I'm not just trying to get rid of you." And she went on to another salon and had them do her hair. I should have known then that she was crazy and then she ended up coming back and I went through another thing with her. But anyhow, the reality of how much I can get done for my business while not doing hair was really revealing during that respite.

CT: Yes, I can see that being a challenge. Even with my work. As much as I've been an artist all my life, I had to become a business owner two. It's like wearing two different hats. It would be nice to only have to do one thing.

AP: Your art.

CT: Did you miss the art part? Did you miss the connection [with your customers]?

AP: Initially, no. I realized I like administrative work. I liked organizing. I was one of the first salons to have a web presence, I got my website up and all of that.

CT: How many stylists do you manage?

AP: I think I have 12. There was a point where I was struggling so much financially that I sort of sequestered myself in my office and I wasn't connecting with my staff or the customers. I was sort of removed. So how I turned that around was that I started doing consultations. Because I realized that I liked people and I liked interacting with people and inspiring them to love their hair. So that's how I reconnected with customers and that's how I'm getting into social media.

CT: So I think the woman I was photographing…was she African?

AP: Hmm mmm. She's from Senegal.

CT: Do you see a difference with the stylists who are from Africa doing these styles compared to those who were trained in beauty schools here that might not have as much experience [working with natural hair].

AP: Yeah, I do see a difference. A lot of times, not in every instance, the women from Senegal, were not braiders at home, they started braiding once they found out in America you can make a lot of money doing this. And there's a difference, I think, between those women and those who actually braided for a living from home. One of my first African stylists, not only was she a braider, but so was her mother and her grandmother, so she had a different aesthetic from everybody else. She really knew how to do hair. The other thing that I find missing from Africans is the care about the person's own hair. It's about styling. They take our your hair line, or go bald in some spots, because of style that you're choosing. Oh well, that's what happens. Just keep working around that. I don't have that in my salon, because I don't allow it. But I've seen the damage from those types of salons.

CT: And those are straight African…?

AP: Right, and I see a difference in the cleanliness of the salon. And if you go to any of those African shops, the proverbial African shop on 125th St [Harlem], it's a whole different environment. It's about quantity over quality. I think that any stylist who goes to beauty school and graduates has a different sense of the profession. It's more professional. She knows more about hygiene and even though she may not be using chemicals to process the client's hair, she knows how to treat that hair.

CT: How many white clients do you have?

AP: Very little. Less than 1%

CT: Just that if you were going to grow out your hair naturally, and maybe you can talk about your products and how they help, do they detangle it enough so you can pick it out or…?

AP: The thing that I tell people, you know a lot of people come in to see us for consultation, when you decided to go natural there's different ways that that can happen. You can go to one extreme and cut off all your processed hair, starting with your natural hair, you know after you let it grow out for six weeks, you can cut it down to your natural hair. That is very radical for some people and most people don't want to do that because it's too drastic for them and they're attached to the length.

CT: Have you seen people do that?

AP: Oh yeah.

CT: Did they break down? What happened?

AP: Yeah, but not too often. Usually when people come to us, we make sure that they are ready, because we don't want any scenes and we don't want you unhappy. So most people, if they're going to go that far, they've kind of prepared themselves. So that's one extreme. The other extreme is that I once had a lady who came in here and had five inches of new growth and five inches of permed hair. I don't know how she did that. I could never…I'm just too impatient for that [laughing], you know. And then the other option is to wear your hair in styles that allows your hair to grow out and then you can cut it little by little as it grows out, one of the ways you can do that is to get a twist or a braided style or to get a rod set, or roller set to wear you hair out. A lot of people who wear their hair natural don't want braids, they don't want twists, they don't want their hair bound up in those types of styles, they want it out and loose. So the option for them is to style their hair loosely with a set and that set, you know it will evolve over days, it's not going to look on day five like it looked on day one and two weeks later it's going to look different still.

CT: So do you use heat?

AP: We set it on rods and then we set you under the dryer, that's the heat part of it, and each day you can finger comb it into place and shape it. The products I have are designed to add moisture to you hair. That's one of the things that people have a problem with when their hair is natural, it's never shiny enough for them. Our hair doesn't really shine in that same kind of way, because of the coil, you can't see the shine. People think *oh, I oiled it and I moisturized it yesterday or three days ago and now it's dry.* Well it's like make-up or brushing your teeth, you have to reapply [laughing]. So those are the options and some of the things people have to decide in terms of how they want to go into this new process.

CT: So do you to any chemical treatments here?

AP: A couple. I even did a video on that, on women who don't, or choose not to color their hair, because you know so many women believe that they look younger with dyed hair and they don't, they look like they have dyed hair [laughing]. But a lot of people swear…one lady came for a consultation and her hair was so damaged and so horribly dried out and brittle and I said, "You really should stop coloring." And she said, "You might as well ask me to jump off of a bridge first. I will not ever stop coloring my hair." I didn't know what to tell her. Her hair was like straw. It was over-processed. It looked a hot mess. And I said, "You're going to end up with no hair at your stage."

CT: Well you're dealing with the psychological [issues people have]. Like you said, you were traumatized as a kid. Some people brains are attached to a certain identity and they can't see [what you see], they can't let it go. I guess it's your job to steer them in the right direction, but you can't make it happen.

AP: Right, I can lead them to water…

CT: …but you can't make them drink. Let's talk a little bit about being a salon owner versus a hairstylist. At what time did you make that transition? Why were you more serious about not physically doing hair?

AP: Well…another traumatic experience, at one point in the '90s, I started roller-skating on a regular basis and I was learning how to skate, the right way and I fell. My skates came up from under me and I landed on my butt but I tried to break it with my hand and I broke one of my wrists [laughing]. I fractured my wrist and I couldn't work for six weeks. And in that six weeks, the amount of stuff I got done for my business changed it. I was able to apply for my incorporation…all the things I had wanted to

one sister against another based on her hair choices. That was the frame of reference I was coming from but then I found out that even people who are into processed hair had problems with her hair because they felt it wasn't coiffed enough, it didn't look refined enough and I thought, "How stupid can you be?" Here is this woman on the world stage, breaking world records and you're worried about her hair? You need a life [laughing]. So that was my take on it.

CT: I think it's interesting. No matter what we do there is always going to be this story. And I know that hair is really important and that's why I think it's kind of ironic that hairstylists aren't considered as important as they are because hair is one of the most important things…there was a Yale psychologist that did a study where she had a picture of the same face and put five different hairstyles on it and asked all these questions like, "How wealthy do you think this woman is? How smart is she? How educated? How successful?" And they had wildly different answers just because of her hairstyle. They didn't recognize that it was the same face.

AP: Wow.

CT: It's a catch-22. All these people were sending me emails…The LA Times did a feature, all these people did opinion pieces about Gabby [Douglas] trying to understand why people were so [upset about her hair]. I looked at it and thought it was a little fuzzy at the roots, but who cares? It looked like everybody else's hair. What was it?

AP: I think that we still have very deep-rooted self-esteem problems, as a community and when we see someone on the world stage, we want them to be perfect, especially for white people. They represent us and they should have everything together. They can't have their nails not done perfectly or a hair out of place, the make-up not right and it's because of our lack of self - esteem, is where that comes from. And then every black person on the world stage has to live up to our standards of what we feel should represent us. And to me it has an opposite effect because now people of other cultures look at us and are saying, "look how shallow you are. All you care about is what you have on, what you look like, what your nails look like. No wonder you can't feed your children or get your children educated properly because you're putting your focus and your money in the wrong area."

CT: So what did you think about [the documentary] "Good Hair"*?*

AP: I didn't like it. I think…I was sitting there wondering why I didn't like it. But there was this white guy in front of me who was having a hell of a lot of fun. So afterwards I asked him, "who was he?" You know. He was a writer from the New York Post, okay, not the Washington Post [laughing], so that was really my confirmation about why I didn't like it. For him it was a spoof on us. The scenes of kinky hair rolling down the street like tumbleweeds and people saying nobody wants kinky hair, that's a lie, because I sell a lot of kinky hair, extensions. People are buying kinky hair. So don't tell me nobody wants it. And so his story was very one-sided.

CT: That's interesting. I used to know this woman, not very well, but she worked at this hospital and she had an amazing Afro. It was stunning. I loved her hair. I thought it was so great. And one day I came in and it was gone. She cut it all off. And I said, "What happened?" And she said, "This was too much work." [we both laugh]. So I think there is a misconception about…when you have *any kind* of hair, you have to know how to maintain it. And I think a lot of people especially of my gener[ation]…well I don't know if it's generational, but I know a lot of people who grew up having processed hair don't know where to begin, if they want to wear their natural hair. So can you talk about what it means to maintain one of those big Afros and how many of them do you think are real hair? I didn't know they were popular as hair extensions but I believe it because it's probably a lot of work.

AP: It's funny that you asked my that question because I was speaking to a friend yesterday who has worn her hair natural for a long time but she either had locks or braids or lock extensions was the last thing she had and then she got braids after that and she said, I just want to wear my own hair but I can't figure out what to do with it. I said to her, "Well the first thing I recommend is come in and have your hair shaped into a style that will be easy for you to handle on a daily basis because it's going to come back to that shape no matter what you do to it." And I said, "We have products now, there are so many products on the market, I just launched my own product line that will help you have texture, and it will make it so much easier, why do you think as a non-professional hair person, that you should know how to do this? This is a profession." So even if you're savvy with hair and you have dexterity and even creativity doesn't necessarily mean that you know what to do. So take a person who has none of those things and they think they should know how to do it, because it's natural. You shouldn't. Just like somebody who's been cooking fried chicken all their life wouldn't expect to know what to do if they wanted to become a vegan. You need to go see a professional. What else did you want to know?

like that but I became very popular with that hairstyle, I was surprised, you know people thought I was a trendsetter [laughing], all the while I was cringing and thinking of every person I saw *if only my hair was that long…if only I had that much hair.* But it grew out, there was no permanent damage, thank goodness. So hair has been around me all the while. Like I said, my grandmother was a hairstylist.

CT: Where are you from in the south?

AP: Norfolk, Virginia

CT: And then you move to where in New York?

AP: Brooklyn, New York. So by the time I got to high school, Afros weren't the rage anymore, the whole black power [movement] sort of eased out of the scene, so I started pressing and curling my hair. I knew I would never put a perm in my hair again, I was so afraid of those things. My mother knew how to do hair because my grandmother knew how to do hair, so my mother became my hairstylist, so I used to get my hair pressed and curled by my Mom. And then when I went to college, I was living in D.C. and it is so humid in D.C. Everyday, I found, in the summertime I was having to retouch my hairline with a hot comb and I said, "I'm going to ruin my hairline like this." And by this time, even though I didn't realize it, I had a certain idea around healthy hair and I didn't want to mess up my hairline to have my hair straight so I said, "I'm going to start braiding my hair." And that's when I started braiding my own hair. And I met this guy that said, "If you can braid, the salon I work at is looking for a braider." So I was in school for Communications. When I was in high school, I would read all these Anthony Robbins books about the communication industry and I wanted to be a newscaster and then had gone to D.C. a couple of times to visit friends and saw all the black newscasters and I was like "Oh, I'm going to be a newscaster!" And I took off a semester to do hair and I never got back. One semester led to another that I didn't get back and then another…and finally in 1987, no '85, '84, I went to beauty school and I got my license.

CT: Which beauty school?

AP: I went to Robert Fiance

CT: Was that in Brooklyn?

AP: No Robert Fiance was in the city [Manhattan].

CT: When did you come back to New York from D.C.?

AP: I came back to New York in '77, or '78.

CT: Do you have any thoughts about…you know that was about the time the movie "Ten" came out.

AP: Yes, yes, when I was braiding, "Ten" came out, my friends and I were militant and we wouldn't braid any white people's hair and I had moved to Miami and this guy wanted me to do his girlfriend's hair and he was willing to pay me a lot of money, this couple who lived in Coconut Grove, and I just couldn't do it.

CT: Why, what was it about?

AP: I think back now, that I was stupid. I don't know. I didn't like the fact that they were claiming it. And I felt they were insincere about wanting it anyway. It was just a fad for them and I was really into my culture and all that and I just didn't want to.

CT: Yeah, there was a lot of controversy. A lot of people didn't like it. And then there was issue going on in the courts at that time with a woman from, I think it was American Airlines who tried to wear her hair natural and she was fired and even today you know with Gabby [Douglas], what are your thoughts about that?

AP: I didn't read any of those tweets. But I did post on my Facebook Page how horrible I think it is because there's a whole new generation of young women who are discovering their natural hair, they are rather militant about it because they feel like they've been tricked. You know, they came up with perms and being told that their hair wasn't good enough it wasn't the right texture and now they've discovered their new hair and their extremists and I think they are being divisive without realizing that it's pitting

ANU PRESTONIA
KHAMIT KINKS

INTERVIEWER:	**Candacy Taylor**
INTERVIEWEE:	**Anu Prestonia**
DATE & TIME:	**September 5, 2012 1pm**
LOCATION:	**400 Atlantic Avenue**
	Brooklyn, NY 11217
RECORDER:	**Marantz 661 – 24/96**
TIME	**00:34:57**
TRANSCRIPT:	**8 pages**
KEY:	**CT: Candacy Taylor**
	AP: Anu Prestonia

CT: I am with Anu Prestonia at Khamit Kinks in Brooklyn. It is September 5th, it's 12:12. Can you tell me how many years you did hair and how many years you have been a beauty shop owner?

AP: I started doing hair professionally in the summer of '78 and I stopped doing hair myself in 1998, so that was 20 years that I actually did hair.

CT: Where did you start?

AP: Well I always used to be the "go-to" person to get your hair done, when the Afros were big and guys used to go and play basketball and wanted their hair braided, you know, so I was that girl. My grandmother was a hairstylist. I came up during the "black and proud" era and when I was in college and I needed money and started wearing my own hair braided, a popular salon was looking for a braider and I was like "I've always known how to braid." He said, "Well you really should come down and apply for a job and I did. They didn't know how to measure whether or not I was good. They hired me and I happened to be good [laughing].

CT: What did you like about it? Did you ever want to do anything else? What was the process?

AP: The full story is that I had a traumatic experience as a ten-year old child moving to New York from the south. We were all excited to find out that we were going to get perms. I had a perm and my hair, you know was fine that first time around and then when my mom found out six-weeks later that we needed a touch-up. She was balking about the price and I was like, "Oh wow, I don't want her upset about the price, so I'm going to figure out a way to make it last longer." So when the stylist came around to see if my hair was burning I would tell her "no" because I thought the longer it was on my head, the longer my perm would last. That was the psychology of a ten-year old [laughing]. So when she asked me if it was burning I kept telling her "no" and finally she said, "We're going to rinse it out." Weeks later I had sores in my head. I had pus oozing out the sores. My hair was all broken off so my mother cut all my hair off. And I was just devastated because I always wanted long, you know, wavy curly hair and now I had no hair [lauging].

CT: That is traumatic, especially at the age of ten.

AP: Yeah, so I went to wanting somebody else's type of hair to be happy to having any hair. I didn't think about it then, that it would have that kind of impact on me but I knew I was traumatized because I was the only one wearing this little Afro and this was like '67, '68 and so Afros were only being seen in magazines, just kind of coming into magazines with celebrities and things