

Stephany Obianaewu

Visual Essay

Project Summary:

The idea of selecting my topic for my visual essay came from a conversation I had with my mom earlier this week surrounding the term “wash day” and its history within the black community. Now hearing this you may ask yourself what is “wash day” and what does it have to do with the black community? Well for those not apart of the black community “wash day” doesn’t happen to be just a day where one washes their hair, but it happens to be a ritual in which every black girl experiences. You see growing up black, we are raised and taught to always keep our hair maintained because it inadvertently was a representation of our mothers. Therefore, once a week our mothers would dedicate a whole day to washing and styling our hair, now you must be thinking that this sounds like a stretch because washing and styling hair couldn’t simply take up a whole day. Well, it couldn’t be further from the truth, as every black girl knows it a process that often takes from morning to night. You see for those of us who grew up with unruly curls, we would often dread the day due to the longevity of the progress as well as all emotions that came with it. For hours and hours, we were subjected to sit and endure through continuous washing, detangling, sectioning, and braiding hair in order to achieve maintained hair. This shared experience is symbolic as it represents black culture as well the history attached to “wash day”. I choose to photograph my little sister Isabella as she went throughout the process of “wash day” to show the extent in which black girls have to endure to maintain their hair. Often times black hair is not shown the love and appreciation it needs and deserves. Therefore, I felt it fitting with it being Black History Month to dedicate my visual essay to showcase the beauty which is black hair. Hopefully my visual essay will help you understand “wash day” as well as understand its significance to our culture and history.

Photo Captions:



01: Isabella's hair in the morning prior to "wash day". High Angle (Bordwell and Thompson,



02: My mom using a hair-steamer to detangle the hair before washing it. Low Angle (Bordwell and Thompson, 189) and Size Difference (Block, 27)



03: Isabella crying during washing her hair. Extreme Close Up (Block and Thompson, 189)



04: Isabella fixing her wrap towel in the mirror. One-Point Perspective (Block, 16-18)



05: Sectioning and Parting the hair. Medium Close up (Bordwell and Thompson, 189)



06: The spray bottle that is used throughout “wash day”. Focus (Block, 42) and Flat Space (Block,



07: Coffee hair mask used to deep condition Isabella's hair. Textural Diffusion (Block, 34-35) and Limited Space (Block, 52)



08: Isabella eating while deep conditioning her hair. Canted Level (Bordwell and Thompson, 188)



09: My mom completing Isabella's final two sections of braids. Deep Space using Depth Cue (Block, 14-15)



10: Isabella smiling with her freshly braided hair after enduring “wash day”. Two-Point Perspective (Block, 18-21)

Camera: Apple iPhone 11