

My African Hair That Could Not Be Blown By The Wind

by Tiffany Mutie

The wind blows softly across my face
As I watch the sea waves subside,
My hair is definitely not blown by the wind
Reason being
I'm an African girl.

Sorry if I was not 'blessed.'
With beautiful, smooth, straight Caucasian hair.

My hair tangles even
When a drop of water falls on it.

'Tis hard to straighten it out
It shrinks, you'd think I do not grow my hair
And when it is finally straightened,
After all the pain of doing so (getting migraines afterward),
It still won't be swayed by the wind.

A petty thing that is to complain about
But I wish they would see that their standards
Made me acquire this 'pettiness' about
My hair's inability to be blown by the wind
Like it is in the movies
I watched my when I was a little girl
Where all the characters were white.

And the one character resembling my skin colour
Although not exactly since
Lighter black girls were chosen for the roles,
Were depicted as being uncultured, unrefined, uncouth
Some would call it being ghetto.

Oh, how I wanted to grow up and be like those girls
I totally lost my identity
Even now as a young lady
I still look at the white girls' pictures
And wish that I would be as *successful*.

The definition of success for me is:

“How the white girls dress,
The houses they live in, and
The values they uphold.”

I have grown to be a completely Westernised young lady
One who views anything African as being deficient in *class*.

All because of the harsh standards subjected to me as a little girl
To be neat and proper
To have my hair straightened out because
“No one wants to see all that bush and mess growing on my head.”
So they called my kinky afro.

As a young lady, I have to wear straight wigs
To look ‘professional’ at the workplace.
Now I wonder how many girls of colour
Experience the same insecurities about
Their skin colour and hair.

All because of the Eurocentric beauty standards
Subjected to them as children
If I could
About being judged for my afro-textured hair
So that I would wear my natural hair as it was
And still feel beautiful in it.

So that I was just like the White person
The perfect person
Capable of securing lucrative jobs easily and
Affording a decent living standard
Without worrying about colourism and systemic racism
But most important of all
I would have grown straight hair
And not just straight hair
Straight hair that could be blown by the wind as I sat by the sea.