

To Hair and Back: My Journey Toward Self-Love One Strand at a Time

Rhonda Eason

Rhonda Eason (Sep 1, 2017)

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This memoir about learning to value yourself despite social expectations is doused in wit and self-reflection.

Rhonda Eason's book is the honest story of how one black woman conquered an insurmountable challenge: her hair.

After looking around at the long, bouncy locks of the women in her immediate family, Eason concluded that if hair is a woman's glory, some black women do not experience its magnificence. The revelation hit her in elementary school, when she first began dreaming that her life would be transformed if only she had long, silky hair.

Hers is a realistic, familiar plight. Media images and societal views of beauty adversely affect girls and women who don't quite measure up to these standards. Eason's clash led to a lifetime of chasing the ephemeral hairstyle that would make her feel beautiful and worthy.

Each chapter begins with a quote and a compelling title, from "A Jheri Curl Saved My Life" to "Wiggy, wiggy, wiggy, wiggy," before revealing one of Rhonda's hair stories. These tales are sometimes raw and embarrassing, such as when a bird pooped in her hair and she mistook it for extra juicy Jheri curl moisturizer. Eason is a natural storyteller, though descriptions of her hairstyles—from cornrows and relaxers to weaves and crochet braids—would have been enhanced by photographs.

Engaging details about colorful family members and life experiences—from the military to Eason's acting aspirations to the death of her father—serve as a backdrop. While the book is seemingly not intended to speak for anyone other than Eason, it does contain some assumptions about black women and what they supposedly prefer when it comes to their hair.

The humorous "can I get a witness" tone does not mask the sociocultural and political aspects of the book; for example, through Rhonda's stories about serving in the military, racism surrounding black women is presented as subtle and systemic.

To Hair and Back is doused in wit and self-reflection. Eason learned to value herself despite the texture of her crown, and this book will encourage others to take a similar stance.

KAAVONIA HINTON (September/October 2017)

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