

SANDRO MILLER – 'Sandro Miller x J.D. Okhai Ojeikere: My Hair, My Soul, My Freedom' - 7th May - 9th July 2022
'Angela Bassett Honors the Exquisiteness of Black Hair' by Angela Bassett, on March 22nd 2022 in Oprah Daily
(<https://www.oprahdaily.com/beauty/hair/a39490345/angela-bassett-black-hair/>)

Angela Bassett Honors the Exquisiteness of Black Hair

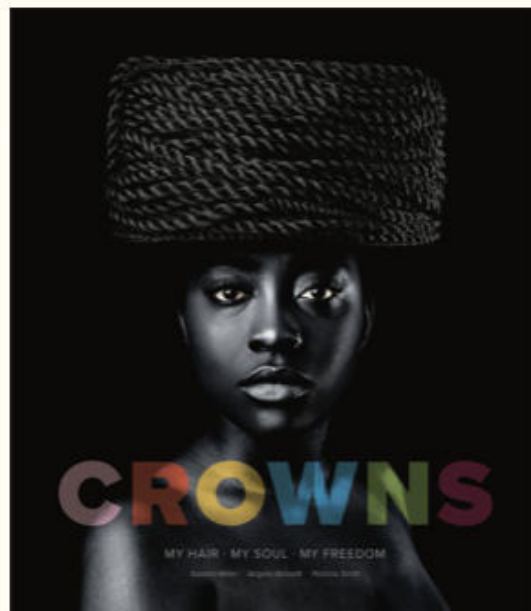
In an exclusive excerpt from the new photography book "Crowns: My Hair, My Soul, My Freedom," the Oscar nominee explores the artistry and allure of traditional hairstyles.

BY ANGELA BASSETT MAR 22, 2022



SANDRO MILLER

Black hair is celebratory. Black hair is transformative. Black hair is rich and alluring and wondrous. But only recently has Black hair been given its due in the strange world of mainstream beauty. Photographer Sandro Miller has always marveled at its regality, and his new book, Crowns: My Hair, My Soul, My Freedom, with more than 100 black-and-white portraits of women from across the globe, is a testament to that. “I document body art, and am witness to the many unspoken ways in which Black women declare their freedom—by choice and sensibility—by sculpting their managed, structured hair,” Miller tells Oprah Daily. “Each portrait in this project recognizes and honors women’s inventive power and beauty while celebrating, at the same time, their social endurance and cultural memory.”



Crowns: My Hair, My Soul, My Freedom is available now wherever books are sold

SANDRO MILLER

The photographer, who is white, dedicates the book to his Haitian-Dominican wife, and Miller's arresting portraits are of other everyday women, from teachers to advertising executives to architects from all over (he traveled to Chicago, Senegal, and South Africa to document his subjects). Set against a backdrop of various traditional African textiles, Miller's portraits are striking and visceral. And it's noteworthy that within a few days of the book's publishing, the United States House of Representatives passed The CROWN Act, a groundbreaking piece of anti-bias legislation aimed at prohibiting discrimination based on race-based hairstyles, such as cornrows and locs. Miller is elated at this development: "Black women are announcing their new normal—no matter the style or the texture, whether they wear braids, locs, or weaves, and whether their hair is natural or straightened."

In a moving foreword to Crowns called "The Angels Are Amongst Us," Oscar-nominated actor Angela Bassett writes about how the hair of some of the iconic real women she's portrayed over the years has factored into her performance—and how it plays a major starring role in the lives of all Black women. —Brian Underwood, beauty and wellness director

Black women and hair have been interchangeable topics frequently explored and discussed but never fully understood. It's complicated.

A Black woman's hair is her daily statement to the world and could rightly change shape and form, depending on her mood, attitude, thoughts, and spirit. For the Black woman, hair holds a transformative power, both for her and everyone who comes into contact with her. A Black woman's hair communicates so much about her on any given day, at any given time. Curly vs. straight, natural vs. relaxed, short vs. long, weave vs. trackless, braids, twists, and everything in between. No other woman on the planet can express her individuality and creativity via the follicles that cuddle her head like the Black woman. And that's why there is such fascination with what we have come to relate to as our "crown."



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What many do not realize is a large part of achieving this is not just the words spoken or some particular idiosyncratic behavior the woman possesses, but it's her "crown" that also distinguishes her from the next. Katherine Jackson's crown was different from Tina Turner's crown. Rosa Parks' was nothing like Queen Ramonda's. And Stella's was a departure from Bernadine's. Putting on each woman's "crown" gave me a vessel through which to hold up a lens to her life and tell a story about her movement through a world that was specific and distinctive to her. Each woman depicted on the pages of *Crowns* boldly tells her own story. It is what makes me so proud of this book and what deems it magical, worthy of celebration, and yes, absolutely necessary.

BEAUTIFUL CROWNS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE



Crowns makes me feel proud as I gaze and conjure magical moments of memory pertaining to the transformations of my own hair and how my “crown” has always been a testament of my personal strength, confidence, and beauty. My “crown,” and how I wear it, has given me an appreciation of the beauty that comes from within and extends to the outside world. We, Black women, are the sacred keepers and the dream weavers. We have witnessed and carried so much throughout history, all while continually expressing the best that we have to offer.



**MY “CROWN,” AND HOW I WEAR IT,
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Crowns, a book created for every generation and people from all walks of life, honors our contributions of beauty and artistic expression, and roars with a sassiness that demands acknowledgement of our birthright. Let us remember that we are and always have been regal, courageous, compassionate, filled with wisdom.

I am truly humbled by Black women’s ability to survive, persevere, resist, and reinvent ourselves, generation upon generation. I salute each and every one of you—past, present, and future. We are the inheritors of new beginnings from a profound legacy of being trailblazers and heroes, deserving the adornment of a true crown. Be real, be brave, be free in spirit, and always appreciate and celebrate that which makes you so unique...and a Queen.