



Mother Knows Best: Amber and daughter Niko, 9, enjoy hair time.

Magic Hair

A mother's mission to have her daughter love her kinky coils and the wig that threatened it all BY JEANNINE AMBER

The minute my daughter opened the box, I thought, *This could be trouble.* The box contained a long, flowing black wig that was meant to go with the Wonder Woman costume she'd chosen for Halloween. Nearly two feet long with big barreled curls, it was the type of hair my child would never have.

As a baby, my daughter had a head full of pinwheel

curls I'd gather up in bright pink clips. But by the time she was 2, her beach-ball-size Afro became, as one friend put it, "a force of nature." It burst from her head, electric and wild, looping into knots the moment I undid the braids.

One day an older Black woman visiting my home said, in front of my then 3-year-old child, "Too bad she didn't get your

good hair." I bristled. "Her hair is beautiful," I said, picking up my daughter and leaving the room to end the conversation. I had one thought: *My child will not grow up thinking there is something bad about her hair.*

I began whispering things as I did her hair each week. "Your hair is gorgeous," I'd say, picking out her Afro puffs. "So pretty and beautiful and thick."

"What you have," I'd tell her as I tucked her in at night, "is magic hair. We can twist it, braid it, or put beads in it. Not every girl is as lucky as you."

Other days I encouraged her participation. "Draw

the style you want," I'd say. She'd hand me a picture, announcing it was a castle, and I'd twist her hair into gravity-defying peaks.

Sometimes, when I needed a break, I'd take her to the salon and present the stylist with a crayoned drawing of something that resembled the Eiffel Tower. "She wants her hair to look like this," I'd explain.

Of course, we still had our moments, like the day a little boy at school made fun of the plastic daisies I'd wrapped around her puffs—she came home wailing that she looked like a flowerpot. Or the afternoon she called me at work begging me to come home *immediately* to loosen her too-tight braids. Or those horrible evenings when I was in too much of a rush to be gentle and yanked the comb through her hair as she wept.

Still, something must have resonated, because when a hairdresser suggested my daughter get a texturizer, she quickly shielded her crown with one hand and held the other one up in protest: "No chemicals! I like my hair natural!"

But never had we faced the allure of a wig: I feared the minute my daughter felt those silky tresses all my hard work would be undone. She ran into the bedroom with the box and emerged looking like a child beauty-pageant contestant. "This looks ridiculous!" she said. "Can Wonder Woman have Afro puffs?"

"Honey," I said, slipping the wig off and kissing her forehead, "I can't think of anything more wonderful for Wonder Woman than your magic hair."

ANDREW BEELTON

BABY HAIR

Carol's Daughter founder Lisa Price shares tips on styling your little princess' tresses BY TASHA TURNER

TIGHTLY COILED

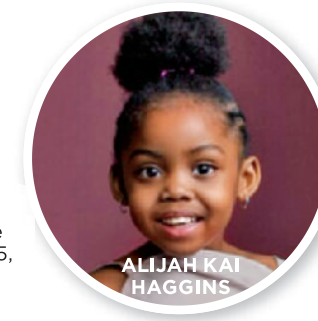
ITS MANAGEABILITY and health requires "a moisturizing lotion to hydrate and a pomade for shine and hold," Price says. Avoid petroleum- and mineral-oil-based products that cause buildup, tangling and matting. Try a light oil for 15- to 18-month-olds and a light hairdress for 2 and up.



LUSTER'S PCJ Pretty-n-Silky Crème Oil Moisturizing Lotion (\$3, beautyofnewyork.com).



ORGANIC ROOT STIMULATOR Olive Oil Edge Control (\$5, Walgreens stores).



ALIJAH KAI HAGGINS

CURLY

DEFINITION AND UNIFORMITY are key, so keep locks hydrated, Price says. Cut hair to shape and embrace the natural curl, play with ponytails, braids and twists or let curls loose for variety. Infants can use their body moisturizer on hair and scalp, too.



CAROL'S DAUGHTER Hair Milk Lite The Curl Booster (\$20, carolsdaughter.com).



SOFT & BEAUTIFUL Just For Me! Oil Moisturizing Lotion (\$4, beauty supply stores).



AOKI LEE SIMMONS

WAVY

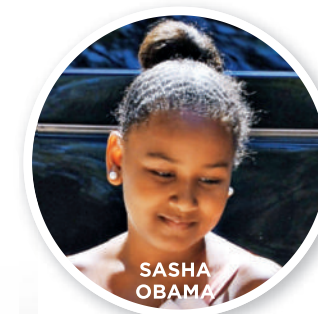
CHOOSE PRODUCTS THAT SOFTEN and help fight frizz but won't weigh down hair, says Price. Experiment with hair accessories that allow the hair to be carefree. But it's important to cut your child's hair when necessary. Don't believe the myth—cutting her hair before she's 1 won't stunt the growth.



CURLY Q'S Moist Curls Organic Moisturizer (\$14, curls.biz).



MISS JESSIE'S Baby Buttercreme (\$32, missjessies.com).



SASHA OBAMA

THAT GIRL'S GOT STYLE

Willow Smith's funky looks took center stage at *The Karate Kid* premieres across the globe

Whether or not you're digging Willow's Mohawk, Mr. and Mrs. Smith encourage their daughter's self-expression. In fact, Willow, who recently signed to Jay-Z's Roc Nation record label, celebrates her hair with a debut single entitled "Whip My Hair."



Madrid



Westwood, CA



Berlin



Los Angeles

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: PATRICK LIOTTA; DIANE COHEN/FAME; TARGET/FAME; JEAN BAPTISTE LACROIX/WIREIMAGE/GETTY; BEN BRITTAIN COHEN/SPLASH; ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY; BAUER GRIFFIN.