

III. Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
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TRANSCRIPTION

Hunter: Hello. My name is Hunter, and this is *A Virtual Little Library for Staying Connected*, created by Dr. Taucia González and myself. Our library is a collection of picture books read aloud by community members that we would like to share with you. These read-alouds are a way for us all to stay connected while also supporting our children while they are unable to attend school. The books and community members we've chosen show the diversity of our schools and communities. We would like to thank our readers and their guests for participating, as well as the Midwest & Plains Equity Center for supporting the project. We hope you enjoy.

Kelvin: Hi, my name is Kelvin.

Blake: Hi, my name is Blake.

Oumar: Hi, my name is Oumar.

Kelvin: Today I'll be reading to you *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, written by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James.

Kelvin: When it's your turn in the chair, you stand at attention and forget about who you were when you walked through that door.

Kelvin: You came in as a lump of clay, a blank canvas, a slab of marble, but when my man is done with you, they want to put you up in the museum. That's my word. He'll drape you down like royalty with that cape to keep the fine hairs off your neck, in a princely role. It's amazing what a tight fade, high, low, bald, does for your confidence. Dark Caesar.

Who knows, you might just smash that geography exam tomorrow and rearrange the entire principal's honor role. A fresh cut does something to your brain, right? It hooks up your intellectual. You're a star, a brilliant blazing star. Not the kind you'll

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find on the sidewalk in Hollywood, nope. They're going to have to wear shades when they look up and catch your shot.

Kelvin: He'll lean you back in the chair, dab that cool shaving cream on your forehead, then craft a flawless line with that razor, slow, steady, surgical. Your friend's your swagger. The cute girl in class across the way won't be able to keep her pretty eyes off of you.

Her friends will giggle and whisper, "Girl, he's so fine." Yeah, that's what they'll say. Whole school will be seasick from the rows and rows of ripples. You'll have more waves on your head than the Atlantic Ocean. Shout out to my do-rag and patience.

Kelvin: There's a dude to the left of you with a fauxhawk, deep part skin fade. He looks presidential. Maybe he's the CEO of the tech company that manufacturers cool. He's a boss, that's how important he looks. The dude to the right of you looks majestic. There are thousands of black angels waiting to guide and protect him as soon as he steps out that door, that's how important he looks.

Kelvin: There's a dude standing in the mirror that can't get over the masterful designs crafted on the side of his dome. Everywhere he goes, people ask him for his autograph. He looks that fresh. He looks like he owns a few acres of land on Saturn. Maybe there's a river named after him on Mars. He looks that important.

There are two dudes, one with locs, and the other one with cornrows, and the lady with butterscotch complexion. And all they want is a shape-up, tapered sides, a trim, and the crisp but subtle line. And sometimes in life, that's all you ever need: a crisp but subtle line.

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Kelvin: When your barber is done, you'll feel like a million dollars and some change. When his fingertips hit you with that apple-green alcohol, or that witch hazel, it'll sting. But not like a scorpion or a hornet; more like an electric stamp of approval. And when you see the cut yourself in that handheld mirror, you'll smile a really big smile. That's the you, you love the most. That's the you that wins everything. That's the gold medal you.

Kelvin: Every person in the shop will rise to their feet and give you a round of applause for being so fly. Well not really, but they'll look like they want to. You'll see it in their eyes.

It's the look your English teacher gives you when she hands you your last test with a bright red 97 slapped on it. It's how your mother looks at you before she calls you beautiful. Flowers are beautiful, sunrises are beautiful, being viewed in your mother's eyes as someone that matters, now that's beautiful. And you'll take it, you don't mind at all.

Kelvin: Finally, he'll remove your cape, then swipe you down with the brush made from a golden horse tail. You'll put the money in his hand without even expecting change back. Tip that man. Tip that man. It was worth it; it always is. You know why? Because you'll leave out that shop every single time feeling the exact same way, magnificent, flawless, like royalty. Hello world.

Kelvin: All right guys, and that's the end of the book. So now we're going to talk to you a little bit about the book, and why it relates to me personally, and a little bit about why it relates to my partners here. So the book relates to me personally because well, I'm a barber first and foremost, I cut people's hair.

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And I do like the feeling it gives other people when I see them, when I finished cutting their hair, and I see them smile, or react a certain way about the haircut. It just makes me feel good, and I know that they're confident in the haircut they just got, and it gives them a lot of confidence.

Kelvin: Blake, how does it make you feel when you get a fresh cut?

Blake: When I get a cut, it's the best feeling in the world. It makes me feel like a new person. Going to the barbershop, or getting cut, is almost like in the event for me. It just makes you feel a lot more confident than you came in, and it's just a good feeling.

Kelvin: That's right. How about you, Oumar? How do you feel every time you get a fresh cut?

Oumar: I feel confident, I feel like a new man, and I feel like I can do almost anything because of how the fresh cut makes me look. So, that's how I relate to the book because when I walk out that door, it's like, "Hello, new world."

Kelvin: Yes, sir. So, I want to just talk to you guys know why I became a barber. So, this is actually a funny story, and I believe it was my summer before going into sixth grade. I was down with my aunt in Georgia and living with her for a little bit, and she had took me to the barbershop. She had took me and my little brother to the barbershop, and we just got these fresh cuts.

And so, I remember that feeling of looking in the mirror, just being super like, "Wow, is this really me?" I really did feel like a whole new person. And so, the next time when my hair started to grow a little bit, and I wanted to cut the hair myself, I took a shaving razor and just shaved my whole head.

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Kelvin: And it looked really bad obviously, but that's kind of what sparked everything. That's what kind of sparked the whole barbering and things like that. So, I'm really glad I actually did that, and got to get the feel for it, and decided that, that's what I wanted to do.

Kelvin: So, yeah I've been basically cutting my own hair since about the sixth grade, and I'm now in college going into my sophomore year. So, when was the first time you guys remember your first time getting a haircut from a barber shop, or what was your first experience like getting a haircut? Blake.

Blake: Well, growing up, I always got cut by my father. So I didn't know anything different than his haircuts, and those were the best haircuts because they were free.

Kelvin: That's right.

Blake: So, I don't really remember my first time going to be cut by him because I was cut from him since I was a young age. He's always known how to cut hair, so he's cut my hair since birth. So, but I remember my first time going in the, in the barbershop, and I didn't even know, like what about how a barbershop worked. I didn't even know how a barbershop worked.

So I remember sitting down in the person's chair, and him asking me what I wanted. And it clicked in my mind because I never had to tell anybody what I actually wanted. So, I actually had to pull up a picture of like how my hair usually looks to show him what I wanted it. Because I didn't know how to like describe it to him. But that's just a funny story, about me going in the barber shop, and not even being able to tell him what I wanted because I never got cut before in a barbershop. But yeah.

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Kelvin: What about you Oumar. What was your first experience like going into a barbershop?

Oumar: I don't remember my first time going to the barbershop, but I remember my earliest memory. And the reason that I remember was because I used to hate going to the barbershop because I was kind of hyper as a kid, so I used to hate sitting in one spot the whole time.

So, it was one day my mom was like, "Go get a haircut." And I was like, "No." And she said, "Do it." And then she told me if I don't do it, I'll be grounded for a month. And when I just got my first PSP, so yeah exactly. So I was crying, but I went to the barbershop, yeah, and I got a fresh haircut that day.

Kelvin: Yeah, how did that make you feel though? Even though you were forced to go?

Oumar: Yeah, exactly. After, it made me feel good, but before I was...yeah. After, it did make me feel amazing, though. I looked at myself in the mirror, I looked much better. Yeah, it made me feel good.

Kelvin: Shout out to moms for sometimes forcing our hand.

Oumar: Yeah, exactly.

Kelvin: It's what's best for us, right?

Oumar: Exactly.

Kelvin: So I just kind of want to show you guys. I did say a little bit about I was a barber. So I just kind of want to run you guys through some of the tools I use to give people that confidence, that swagger that they walk out the shop with.

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So one of the main things I use, depending on the texture of someone's hair, which is really important in cutting hair, is my clippers here that I use. So I use this to give people fades, any type of haircut really, that they would like, this is, this is the main tool I use to really make that happen. These are called clippers.

Kelvin: And for people with more straight hair, I use sometimes if somebody just wants a little trim, I do have my sheers here, my thinning shears and my straight razor, which all help me effectively get that person that desired look that they're going for.

Kelvin: So yeah, those are all just some things that help me be a good barber I would say. And Oumar and Blake are actually some of my closest friends, and I do give them haircuts. So Blake, how did it make you feel that first time I gave you a haircut? Not really knowing my work, and not really knowing me that well, how did that make you feel? And how do you think that interaction was?

Blake: So, when I sat in the chair for the first time, I didn't really have any expectations because when you go to a new barber, you have to sort of work with the barber, get familiar with them, tell them what you want. So it was really like a trial and error thing, but to my surprise, it was fresh from the first time I ever got cut by you.

And I just remember getting up out of the seat, and looking in the mirror. Actually no, you handed me a mirror. And I'm sure you can remember the look on my face because you just have a big smile on your face, and you thank the barber for cutting your hair, but it was just a good experience. And yeah, it was just a good experience. Yeah.

Kelvin: And one of the amazing things I get to experience as a barber is just the connections I do get to make with different people, different faces from all

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backgrounds and walks of life. Who would've knew that two of my closest friends would have got to meet me through barbering, right? That's the great thing about barbering. You get to meet new people, get to see different faces, get to hear different stories. Oumar, how did it feel when you first got a cut from me? What was that interaction like?

Oumar: Well, at first I hate trying out new things. That's just one thing about me. So when I first got to school, I hadn't gotten my hair cut for I think it was a month now, but because I hate trying new things. So, I wanted to get my haircut, and my brother recommended you because he had gotten a haircut. But when you first came, I didn't know what to expect, but I didn't expect it to be good. Because most barbers I go to on the first try, you know, it was always...they get it wrong. And then I tell them what was wrong, and then they get it right.

Oumar: But when I first got it, when I in the mirror, it was like heaven on earth because...see exactly. It was even way better than I expected, probably the best haircut I've gotten. And I promised myself from that day is if Kelvin's around, I'm not getting my haircut by another person. Exactly. Yeah, it made me feel amazing, it made me feel different, more confident.

Kelvin: That's it, that's amazing. Thank you for that. And that's again, an amazing thing. The confidence that you can get just simply by getting your hair trimmed, just getting a haircut, right? And it's incredible that, that experience, like what that experience can really do for you.

Oumar: And if I may add, like your experience is a lot better because you know how to interact with your customers, you know a lot more making them feel comfortable. Because if I would have been the chair without you talking, interacting, I would

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have been more worried about what you're doing on my hair, but like...yeah, exactly.

Oumar: I didn't even notice you were done until you were done. I think your experience is the best I've had because it's way better. It makes me want to get a haircut because my barber as you said, one of my closest friends, so yeah it's much better.

Kelvin: That's great. Blake, you wanted to add something.

Blake: Yeah. I wanted to add something real quick. Just going off of what Oumar said. The experience is just better in general when you have a connection with the barber, and when you're able to have a conversation. You're not just sitting there silent, and just letting him cut your hair.

Because if you didn't know him at all or her at all, and you were just allowing them to cut your hair, it may be sort of the awkward. But the fact that you're able to have a conversation makes it a little bit more bearable because you're sitting there for such a long time and yeah, that's just a good thing.

Kelvin: Yeah. And I, I believe barbers interacting with people is very, very, very important because you have to earn their trust, right? Because as Oumar said, someone might be coming to you the first time, and they might not know what to expect. They might be worried, and them being worried, that energy can also feed off on the barber.

Kelvin: So, knowing how to interact with different clients, whether that be an older person or a younger person, really helps the experience. And it really helps the client want to actually get a haircut every time they want to get a haircut. So that's really why I really enjoyed this book because it really talks about that experience that you get,

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getting a haircut, and how it makes you feel more confident, more fresh, majestic, like a better version of yourself.

Speaker 5: Thanks.

Kelvin: Thank you guys so much for joining me in my read aloud.

Kelvin (to the audience): What was your first experience like getting a haircut? Write that down, talk about it in class, but thank you so much for coming and joining us and until next time.

Oumar: Thank you.

Blake: Appreciate it. Thank you.

[End of Audio]