

# Assiatou Hann

**Essay - (500-750 words) - Explain a situation where you had to overcome an adversity.**

When I was little, my aunt used to tell me she envied my hair. In black culture, hair is an essential part of a woman's identity. It could represent their spirit, status, and personality. She would elaborate on different styles such as afros, box braids, twists, and puff-ups. I never understood why she was jealous. I would sit on the floor and listen to her elaborate while I was on my Nintendo 3DS.

In the past, I never cared much for my hair. My mom would take care of it while I sat on the floor and played with my 3DS. To me, hair was another part of the body. As I grew older I began to hate my curls. I hated how it was poofy and curly instead of flat and straight. I hated how effortless my classmates' hair looked compared to mine. I hated how different it was to everyone. I started to flat iron my hair once a week. I did not care that it would take me up to two hours. I worked on building an image that would match everyone else's.

Freshman year was the first time I realized the long-term consequences of trying to fit in. I started freshman year continuing old habits from the past, but my self-image began to fall apart. After years of flat ironing, my hair became damaged and dry, and the smallest bit of force would cause it to break. No matter what I did, I felt like I couldn't control my hair. I wasn't aware of how a simple habit in life could cause such damage. By the end of freshman year, I felt so lost with myself and my hair, and I didn't know what to do.

Sophomore year was the first time I looked into myself. With the chaos from freshman year, I decided to try to focus more on myself. It was also the first time I wore my hair curly. It was strange, seeing my long, flat strands replaced with short, curly ones. While it was different, I felt like it looked right. It was the first I was expressing my culture and myself. For the most part, it looked rough, sometimes atrocious, and I had no idea what I was doing. But I, like my hair, grew a lot from the experience.

Junior year was the first time I began to research into my culture and reflect on myself. While I was stuck inside, I didn't let myself stop growing. I did a lot of research into my hair and its importance. I learned what type of hair I had, the importance of moisturizing it, and the dangers of too much heat. I also learned the history of black hair and how it was a sign of safety, status, and equal rights. Soon, my hair recovered and was long enough to try different styles. I wore braids for the first time since middle school. I dyed my hair in different colors. I learned how to curl it without using heat. I wore my hair in afros, twists, and puff-ups. I began to find creative ways to express myself with my hair. I came out of quarantine with a new understanding of myself and my identity.

Senior year is now the first time I ever feel 100% confident with myself. I wear my hair in different styles, from box-braids to wash-and-go's, and I love when people compliment my hair. I think back to the beginning when my aunt told me she was jealous of my hair, and now I understand why. My hair has played a big part in my journey to understanding myself. I learned a new way to embrace my culture and myself. As I continue on my journey in life, I can't wait to see where my hair takes me.