

## Sharing our stories

Have you ever had a burning question and not known how to approach asking this question? Well, working with the St. John Ambulance National Welcome team through its structured questioning, gives you an opportunity to learn about prospective new volunteers wishing to join the organisation.

Working as a co-interviewer, I have had many opportunities to chat with colleagues, when there have been no-shows, I have particularly enjoyed my discussions with Dimitri Oldfield.

I am a self-employed Consultant Trichologist and a Fellow of the Institute of Trichologists, specialising in hair and scalp disorders. I was therefore fascinated by Dimitri's hair which is dressed in dreadlocks and behind these dreadlocks is a very interesting history of his family, his culture and his strongly upheld beliefs. I asked Dimitri if he would put something together for me about himself, so that I could share it with a wider audience. This is his story....

### *Dimitri Oldfield's Family History:*

*The name 'Jamaica' has been derived from the Arawak word "Xaymaca" which means the "Land of Wood and Water", or the "Land of Forest and Water". My family name 'Freeman' stems from the Xaymacan people of the Taino territories of Xaymaca [Jamaica]. My Great Great Grandfather was named 'Freeman' because he was one of the 500 original Tainos left in Jamaica at his time when the native Indians were given their freedom to no longer be slaves anymore. Since the arrival of Columbus it had been a never-ending struggle and war for the people of Xaymaca.*

*Freeman's wife to be was my Great Great Grandmother called Crockshank [Maytoza] from the Crown Eagle Territories of Nigeria. Our crown is in the shape of the snake eating itself in the talons of the Crown Eagle. The stories were passed down to me through Grandmother Mary who was Great Great Grandmother's grandchild, and who told stories of our tribe and how we came to be here. Our heritage, as recalled by Great Great Grandmother was the jungle. Our people are very connected and hold in high esteem our Mother Earth. Our ways*

57 The Ridgeway, Burntwood, Staffordshire. WS7 4SP  
WWW.birminghamtrichology.co.uk  
cpw@birminghamtrichology.co.uk  
Tel: 01543 670717

*are still present in this generation today. We are resistant to the force of change Our relationship with all life is in spirit which is in all of our relationships.*

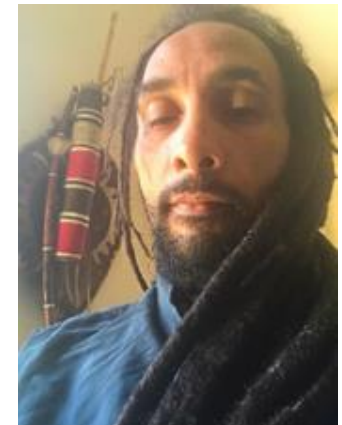
*Our Crown Eagle Tribe, through war and great exhaustion, despite victories, did eventually surrender to the united colonial forces. Due to our warrior reputation, all males, including boys and babies, were massacred and deceived by the colonial forces during this surrender to make void our existence. It is our women warriors and their reputation that carried the strength and our love, fighting every day to continue the bloodline of our peoples. Many of our women found refuge in the neighbouring tribes of Yarube, Ashanti people, and many were sold to South Africa My Great Great Grandmother sold herself to the Crockshank family from Scotland.*

*Great Great Grandmother Crockshank [ Maytoza ] had green eyes and unusual long black hair, being quite different from others where she came from. She was a very beautiful and skilled woman, she knew her arts in indigenous medicine, also how to make pottery and tasty chocolate which the children never missed. Her skill to learn was noticed and she was positioned as the main servant in the slave master's home. It was not long after receiving her blessing of freedom that they sent her to Jamaica to live a free and new life in the JA Crockshank province. It was there she met Great Great Grandfather Freeman, and it was not long before my Great Grandmother Susan Freeman was born to continue the bloodline through 9 of her children.*

*So it is now that our name carries the entire story so we may appreciate today and the present it brings in the world around us. I have been taught to always live positively in the lows and highs and that each day is a new day of adventure for your soul and the beauty our Mother Earth shares with us. These stories and sacred histories of our bloodlines help keep us strong, and keep our tradition and identities firm, showing our light to others.*

#### *Dimitri's Hair*

*At the age of 13, I had my first dreadlocks put in his hair by my Grandmother. She chose to braid my hair into locks using the 3 strand technique (plaiting). I was inspired by a dreadlocked Aston Villa football player to whom*



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*I used to look up to. Has I got older I understood the importance that lay behind the wearing of dreadlocks. I no longer use the three strand method but allow the locks to form naturally.*



*It was at age 21 that I learned the significance of the dreadlocks and how Hair and Nails represents us and our lives, They are the very essence of who we are and, when facing our Creator, we believe that it is our hair that tells our story. Because hair is personal we protect it and any hair that falls goes into a red cloth bag to protect ourselves. I was instructed to never cut my hair, which I have never done When each dreadlock falls it is said to be imitating life in nature, as if a tree being tended by the winds sheds the old to leaves to make space for the new.*

*My Grand Mother Mary taught lessons regarding hair medicine to me in her time, although I have never used it. I have however, collected my hair and observed the Hair Ceremony when we burn the hair which has been collected. In this ceremony, we share prayers and let go of the past to grow into the newness.*

A note on Dreadlocks

Afro hair, which is curly naturally knots so, as Dimitri describes, he snot need to start the dreadlocks. These form naturally. As the dreadlocks continue to gain length, they are shed when the weight of the lock becomes too heavy at scalp level. The forming of dreadlocks then starts again. Dimitri says that he uses natural soap, or natural shampoo and conditioner, after using oils, such as hemp oils and coconut oils to help sustain the hair's moisture.

It is important to note that many people now have their own techniques whether from family tradition or experimentation and the style of dreadlocks that they favour. This is also not limited to those with Afro hair as some people with Caucasian hair also opt to wear their hair in locks. However, this can only be achieved and maintained by regular twisting and matting and using thick waxes to hold the hair in place.

Carol Walker FIT LCGI Cert.Ed  
Consultant Trichologist  
Fellow of Institute of Trichologists (London).

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