

VOGUE

Alvin Ailey Dancer Chalvar Monteiro Shares How Growing His Hair Taught Him Patience and Integrity

By: Akili King

December 10, 2021



Texture Diaries is a space for Black people across industries to reflect on their journeys to self-love, and how accepting their hair, in all its glory, played a pivotal role in this process. Each week, they share their favorite hair rituals, products, and the biggest lessons they've learned when it comes to affirming their beauty and owning their unique hair texture.

For Alvin Ailey dancer Chalvar Monteiro, “movement was always a natural response. If there was music on, I was most likely already on my feet trying to bring the music to life.” Now, he’s bringing this talent to the stage at New York City Center, after two years away due to the pandemic.



Monteiro credits his mother’s fondness for reggae, his father’s jazz, and the gospel he’d hear in church for his love of music and movement. “Pursuing dance as a career became my goal once I saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater perform live at New Jersey Performing Arts Center around the age of 12,” Monteiro says of his dance journey. He began in middle school, then turned professional in 2009. “I enjoy the extensive touring schedule of the Ailey company,” Monteiro says when asked what loves most about being part of the iconic company. “The opportunity to have your craft take you around the globe to drink in all of the beauty this world has to offer is very special.”



Amid all his twirls around the globe, Monteiro has taken special care of his hair. Growing up in the Baptist Church, he considered growing his hair long after reading the story of Samson in the Bible. “His strength that came from not cutting his hair loosely represents the diligence and discipline that’s necessary to commit to all that hair care can be at times,” Monteiro says. He decided to let his hair grow out when he went to college. “Luckily I had family and friends that helped me style it from time to time,” he says. But he also remembers having trouble landing certain jobs upon graduating, told that his look wasn’t “complementary” to the look of the existing company, or that it was “too distracting.”



“Because Black hair has always been heavily policed and politicized, you would rarely see representation of Black men with long hair in most forms of media,” Monteiro says. With that reality, he was pigeon-holed into deciding whether he should cut it all off in order to get the jobs he wanted. “Ultimately, I chose to cut my hair and that decision ended up being one of the many factors that led me to where I am today,” he says. But two years into his time at Ailey, he felt empowered to begin another hair growth journey. “With the help of what I call YouTube University (YU),” he says, laughing, “I was able to easily incorporate new and healthier methods to protect and style my hair.”

His biggest hair inspirations on YouTube are Whitney White and Will Humphrey. “I was initially drawn to them because of the pictures of their beautiful hair and charismatic social media profiles,” he says. “I then took a trip to YU where I was able to get an even



more intimate look at their hair stories.” To maintain the health of his hair, Monteiro turns to Renew Hair Co.’s 10-in-1 Hair Growth Oil. “It’s light enough to apply often but doesn’t leave your hair feeling heavy.” For moisture and style, he uses Mielle Organics Hawaiian Ginger Hair Butter and Gel. “It has a light and refreshing smell and moisturizes without being too heavy or greasy.” And his ultimate favorite? Melanin Hair Care’s Multi-Use Leave-In Conditioner. “The amount of product you get is ideal and the peppermint scent is perfect! A great way to prepare my hair for a wash day, or if I need some moisture during the week after lots of sweaty rehearsals.” This concoction helps him create his go-to styles: two-strand twists, twist outs, and knotless braids. While performing, his go-to style is mini twists. “That way I can style my twists in something comparable to what you’d usually see on a person with loc’d hair.”



Eventually, Monteiro would love to try a variation of goddess locs “so I can live my merman, pirate, island fantasy for a little while.” Until then, he’ll enjoy the confidence that growing his hair has given him. “It’s helped me wrap my mind around the ideas of patience and integrity; learning to enjoy the time it takes to adjust to new parts of yourself as well as the attention and consistency that they need to flourish,” he says. “Through managing very thick hair, I’ve discovered the need to understand the beauty in tangles. Just like in life, ‘knots’ we experience offer us an opportunity to respond with care rather than impatience and self-harm.”