

Hair Love is a playful yet moving animated short film which follows the story of a black father learning to do his daughter's hair. Zuri is getting ready for a big day - her mother is finally coming home from the hospital. Zuri is eager to get her hair exactly right, just like her mother always did. She pulls up one of her mother's online tutorials and diligently follows the instructions step-by-step and the result is ... not what she expected.

Her father meets her, deflated and hair undone. After attempting to do it himself, he gives up and resorts to covering Zuri's hair with a hat. Zuri runs out, refusing to wear the hat.

On one level, *Hair Love* is a powerful story which encourages the black community to love their hair. Zuri's mother is a woman who longs to give black women and girls the tools to celebrate and display their hair, uncompromising and unashamed. Zuri is a daughter who looks up to her mother and learns from her through this.

We also see this as a story about a family teaching and helping each other to embrace parts of their identity which might be difficult to embrace by pointing each other towards truth. When Zuri refuses to let her father cover her hair with a hat, he goes out to find her. She is upset but again prepared to listen to her mother's voice. He realises just how much this means to Zuri so they resolve to try and do her hair together, with the guiding words of Zuri's mother. We realise that



doing Zuri's hair is not just about helping her to embrace her identity as a black girl; it is about loving her and providing a space for her to belong.

As the film concludes, with Zuri and her mother reunited, we learn that this is also a story about knowing that our identity cannot be reduced to just parts of who we are. Even though Zuri's mother is a woman who is proud of her Afro-Caribbean hair as part of her identity, when she loses her hair, she struggles to be proud of who she is. When she receives Zuri's drawing of her as a beautiful, bald and happy part of their family, she realises that she has a more lasting identity which remains even without her hair.

As Christians, this piece

causes us to ask how we can rightfully celebrate parts of our identity without those parts becoming the things which ultimately define us. How can we be better at helping each other celebrate our diversity and the things which help form our identity whilst still pointing each other to the truth of an everlasting and unshakeable identity in Christ? =

You can watch *Hair Love*, winner of the 2020 Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film here: bit.ly/3emYx1X

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