

The Hairapist Is In...Harlem Gains Dynamic Salon

More than a Beauty Salon, the Walters Family is Branding Mastery and Extravagance. RDW Hair & Co. on Malcolm X Boulevard at 118th Street Opens



New York City, New York Oct 27, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The beauty industry, especially beauty services, was significantly [affected by the COVID-19](#) pandemic, and in some cases, it turned out to be a reset, a total makeover, if you will, for innovative stylists. Rochelle Walters, owner operator of [RDW Hair & Co.](#), began re-imagining her business pre-pandemic, but balancing life and three young adult children who were at staggered stages of high-level university, studies abroad and career development, her expansion stuttered at times. In the stillness, albeit quasi-stillness for Rochelle, as a sprinkle of women took the risk of beauty over complete shuddering, she had the time to reposition her affairs.

Rochelle embarked on her stylist journey in her late teens when her mother noticed her creative depth. She had been working in finance, where she excelled, but her artistic expression outshined her banking job. “My parents were very big in the arts and just being creative, and although this was not my immediate passion, for me it was about finance, the banking industry,” Rochelle remembers, “It was just something that I kind of just played around with.” That ‘something’ is a method that over 30 years has amassed a following that is kind of a cultural center.

Her image focalized through the mirror at one of her stations at the new salon on Malcolm X Boulevard in Harlem, Rochelle’s attention is dedicated exclusively to the client in her chair, focusing on her art and tuned in as a personal confidante. The only interruptions allowed, without fail, are calls from any of her three adult children, which further provokes the interest of every eavesdropper in earshot, exposing tremendous emotional endowment, her luxuriant and free imagination and truly great power in navigation.

The newly remodeled RDW Hair & Co. re-opened August 2023 at 168 Malcolm X Boulevard in Harlem. Warm uplifting colors communicate the intimacy of Rochelle’s brand; a brand tough to narrow down to a single niche. However, if we must narrow it down to one word or expertise, that element would be

chemistry. She has mastered the chemistry of hair types, the chemistry of beauty and the chemistry of her clientele and married that chemistry to multiple creative concepts and then al-chemically monetized her hallmark. It is with mastery that she understands hair, or the lack thereof, always on trend, but her trademark is her humility and humanity in gaining an intimate understanding of each client. With limitless proficiency in hairstyling all types, from natural hair to heat or chemically straightening, hair coloring techniques, braiding and twisting, and the standout weaving processes perfected at her hands. Word spread of her creativity and her ability to create more natural looks that allow her to install the undetectable weave. Her precision is unique and exclusive to each customer, where her designs flow in a pattern that complements the way she intends the hair to fall, by either braiding the hair in individual sections with intertwining strands or sewing the extensions onto cornrows in a pattern – and other secret methods. She’s an artist, her salon is her studio and each client becomes her canvas.

On a steamy August day at the narrow space between 118th and 119th Streets, people crowded in and around to congratulate and support the hairstylist, artist, entrepreneur, therapist, businesswoman and devoted mother. This wasn’t Rochelle’s first grand opening, but it was one of the most special, as it was also the launch of her daughters’ new enterprise, “[Sweet Plannin’](#).” Nia Walters, a licensed therapist and mental health counselor and her sister Deanna Walters, a creative director and fashion designer, in their shutdown-stillness conceived a life planner that was both fashionable and functional with the objective of helping people design their life goals and maintain good mental health. Nia, the youngest expounds, “I’m a therapist, the planner is a tool. It’s a resource to plan and organize, create goals, create a sense of future for themselves. Right? I think it’s really important when you are thinking mental health and beauty and fashion, they all segue into the way people feel about themselves.” The short goal for Nia and Deanna is to create a way for individuals to gain hold of their future and ultimately create a better society. In a nutshell, it reads like a blueprint of their successes, shepherded early on by their mom.

Rather than highlighting [her own successes](#), which are extraordinary, extending to celebrity, film, television and high fashion, Rochelle hones into the client in her chair, because that is what matters most in the moment. “I think it’s about the experience,” Rochelle explains, “I want everyone to come and experience something amazing; Let’s work this journey together. Let’s get this hair journey started with just a conversation, which begins with a consultation coming in the door. I believe,” Rochelle continues, “everyone should receive exceptional service without ever being discriminatory. I handle my teachers the same way I handle my VPs of big corporations, I don’t handle anyone differently from the other because you’re all wonderful people to me. To me, it’s just a different flower out of the bunch. You’re all beautiful. You may smell differently, and you may look differently, but you’re all beautiful to me.” And all three agree that all they do is about excellence, being your best, looking your best and making other people feel their very best.

The way these women, this family, crafts their image and their art, continues to evolve simultaneously, as manifestations of their changing selves in a changing world. Deanna desires to bring back mastery and authenticity, “as my mom said, the way a master stylist is supposed to be, not just somebody who happened to work on a celebrity once and they got a hundred followers, but mediocre as a stylist and perhaps not even licensed. It’s like coming back to bare bones.” Deanna ties it all together, “My sister is a therapist who really works with the human mind and behavioral sciences and mental health. And me, I’m a true artist by trade. I’ve studied art, done art my whole life. I’m a real designer. We represent true artistry.”

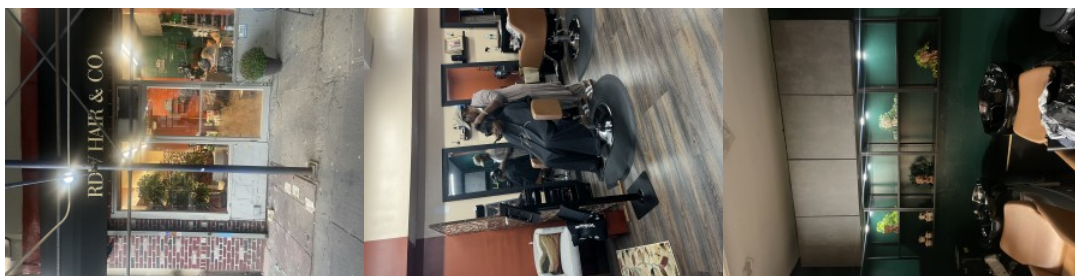
In summation, to each objective, branches from integrity, by experience and by service. And speaking from what might be categorized as a marginalized group, they understand genderism, classism and prejudices in all forms. Deanna, Nia and their brother, Isaiah, who now works in finance, went to

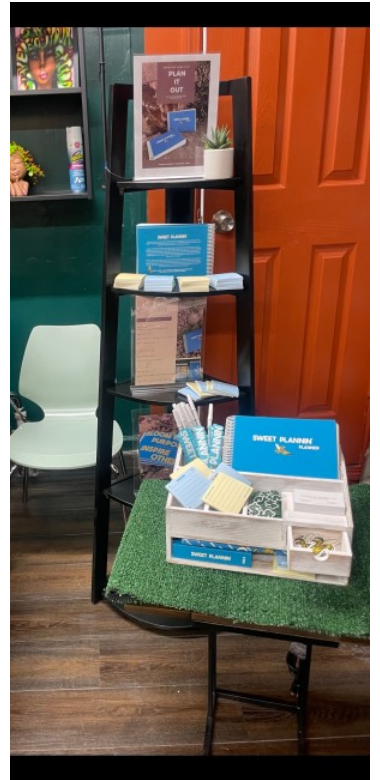
prestigious private schools and completed graduate studies in stateside universities and abroad – so they are well rounded – they have seen all sides. By their mother’s example and by experience, although they have each honed their gifts at high levels, it is essential that all offerings may be attainable to all people, not exclusively to the top tier. Deanna mentions how often they’ve heard people tell their mother she should charge clients \$1,000 just to sit, based on talent and master experience, however, Rochelle is quick to reject that notion. “My enterprise is in Harlem and my price points are for this neighborhood to be able to experience and attain mastery without crushing, because we deserve it.”

Rochelle is repositioning her brand, in line with her daughters’ planning concept, to stabilize her salon in a way that she can branch out to her own product line in addition to teaching master classes that include etiquette, mastery, and finance. She often mixes products for her clients to customize their need, speaking to a variety of variables, from weather, to texture, occupation, age and festivity. The contrast between maintaining her hands on approach and attaining that expansion is the available hours to do it. Rochelle always has on hand a supply of her favorite hair products that she uses on her clients additionally giving away her preferences for their home maintenance. She also inter-mixes, “I’ve learned to make products better. I’ll begin the day listening to the weather forecast and create a mix for that particular day to use on my client. So, it’s definitely in my wheelhouse.”

When Rochelle began her apprenticeship as a teen, near her home in downtown Brooklyn, at an upscale salon on Atlantic Avenue, with a master stylist who incidentally was the sister-in-law of [Floyd Kenyatta](#), who later became the VP of Products for Paul Mitchell, her artistry was quickly recognized, as was her integrity and business savvy. A quick study, Rochelle took on several roles. After completing cosmetology school and returning to the salon as a fulltime stylist, she was left in charge so that the proprietor could take a much-needed vacation. In Walters style, she took on clients, assisted other stylists, kept impeccable books, and maintained the full scope. Upon the proprietor’s return, she thanked Rochelle by giving her an envelope with fifty dollars. That moment was defining for Rochelle, and the onset of her entrepreneurial ventures. Clients had already taken notice and when shortly thereafter, she moved to New York City on the upper west side, starting a family and inadvertently her new business enterprise actuated. The new spacious dining room was perfect for a salon and by word of mouth her client roster grew. “And before you knew it, I had about 150 women coming weekly and bi-weekly, my neighbors, the management office.” Decades later without ever advertising, she has continued that growth trend by word of mouth.

The expansion is on the horizon and Rochelle Walter’s RDW Hair & Co. steps into a new era. Her salon enterprise gave her the stability she needed when she became a single mother, it produced a bright future for all three children, and has given countless women extravagance. “There’s more,” she said, “but right now, I want to make sure the brand is completely solid.”





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Source : RDW Hair & Co.

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