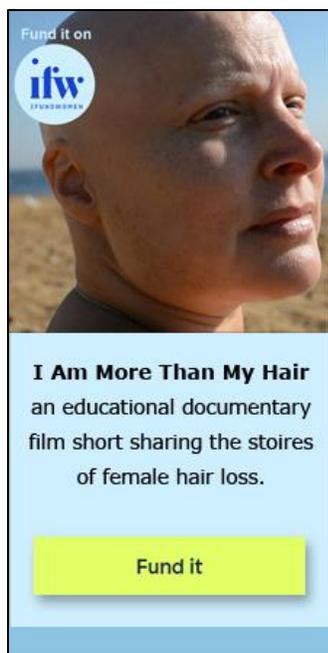


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Silver Spring Filmmaker Redefining Beauty With New Online Campaign

The beauty industry remains slow in changing its unrealistic standards of beauty. Alyscia Cunningham, the director behind “I Am More Than My Hair,” is determined to do something about that, one donation at a time.



SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND — It’s a rather grim statistic. Only four percent of women around the world consider themselves beautiful, according to a [study by Dove](#). While hourglass figures and light-skinned complexions have traditionally defined what it means to be “pretty,” so has a woman’s hair. From hair dye to hair extensions, the industry is expected to climb to a whopping \$94.92 billion by 2021, Statista reports.

“There is such a large amount of pressure on women to have the perfect hair. When alopecia, or hair loss, because of medications or underlying health issues affects a woman, the results are devastating and are damaging to their psyche,” said Alyscia Cunningham, a filmmaker from Silver Spring.

Contrary to popular belief that hair loss only happens to men, approximately 40 percent of women in the United States have visible hair loss by age 40, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. That number only increases as women continue to age.

“Sadly, it has been far more acceptable for men to experience hair loss than women. While most of us will suffer from hair loss at some point in our life, society still says that’s not ‘OK’ for women, that it’s just not ‘normal.’ However, the truth is it is perfectly normal,” Cunningham stressed. “Hair or no hair, women are beautiful in their own unique way.”

And that’s the message Cunningham drives home in her latest documentary, “I Am More Than My Hair,” which features eight brave women at various stages of hair loss. Some of the women featured in the film have suffered hair loss due to cancer treatment, others are due to other health-related conditions that caused alopecia.”

“It is the goal of the film to represent real women’s beauty standards and show that they are not as strictly defined as what we see in media. Very often these are manipulated with airbrushing and photo editing software. The result is a creation that is impossible to achieve,” Cunningham explained.

To help change the perception of beauty, Cunningham is on a mission to reach as many people as possible through her documentary. She wants them to know that beauty still lies in women with or without hair. To do that, she's launched an online fundraiser to make the film accessible for audiences with visual and hearing disabilities, with closed captioning and audio description. This allows for gaps in dialogue to be filled in, and those with visual impairments to keep up with the flow of the film.

Her film is in the final stages of production. Cunningham has turned to the crowdfunding site, www.iFundWomen.com for community support to assist with the final cut. The final cut is when the final edited version of a film is approved for completion. This includes the sound mixing, color correction, music, and motion graphics.

"I turned to crowdfunding because there are plenty of ladies who know what it is like to lose hair. It is my goal to find, help and reach these women and let me them know they're not alone. I also hope to show the beauty industry that there is more to beauty than hair, and it's time we recognize that," continued Cunningham. "This fundraiser is really part of a bigger movement. It's time we send a message to those who set unrealistic beauty standards that we, as women, are done. We demand more real women on the runways and in beauty ads. Enough with the illusions. The 'imperfect' woman is perfect."

Cunningham's goal is \$6,000.00. Interested crowdfunding supporters can find her project, a short intro film and rewards for participating at the iFundWomen website. To learn more about the filmmaker and her latest project, visit: <https://iFundWomen.com/projects/i-am-more-my-hair-short-film>

ABOUT ALYSCIA CUNNINGHAM: Based in Silver Spring, Maryland, Alyscia Cunningham is an entrepreneur, author, speaker, filmmaker and photographer with contributions to National Geographic, Discovery Channel, America Online and the Smithsonian Institution. After the success of Cunningham's first book, *Feminine Transitions: A Photography Celebration of Natural Beauty*, she continues her contribution to social change with her new book and documentary film, *I Am More Than My Hair*.

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