

products, Breedlove took her daughter A'Jelia and \$1.50 in savings to Denver, married her third husband, a newspaper sales agent named Charles Joseph Walker, and with him established a hair-care business. The Walkers made brilliant use of advertising in the growing number of black newspapers, such as those edited by T. Thomas Fortune.

Walker had invented her own "hair growing" product, she claimed, after "a big black man appeared to me [in a dream] and told me what to mix up for my hair." Some of the remedy was grown in Africa, she would recount, "but I sent for it, mixed it up, put it on my scalp, and in a few weeks my hair was coming in faster than it had even fallen out." Walker's grooming products, she insisted, did not "straighten" hair—even then, a politically controversial process—but she also sold a "hot comb," which did in fact straighten kinky hair, consciously tapping into a racial aesthetic that favored Caucasian over African physical characteristics. Throughout the century such celebrities as Nat King Cole, Sugar Ray Robinson, Sammy Davis, Jr., James Brown, and Michael Jackson became cases in point. Walker's products, aided by before-and-after ads that rivaled anything Madison Avenue would invent, made their way into virtually every black home.

In 1908, she temporarily moved her base to Pittsburgh where she opened Lelia College to train Walker "hair culturists." In 1910 she moved her business to Indianapolis, creating the Madam C. J. Walker Hair Culturists Union of America. Tirelessly she traveled the United States, giving lectures and demonstrations on this new and difficult art. Walker attracted the notice of the race's elite, despite the dubious regard in which they held women and hairdressers. She disrupted Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League Convention in 1912 by demanding to be heard. "Surely you are not going to shut the door in my face," Walker shouted to Washington, who had ignored her for three days. "I have been trying to tell you what I am doing. I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. I was promoted from there to the washtub. Then I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. I know how to grow hair as well as I know how to grow cotton. I have built my own factory on my own ground." Needless to say, she got Washington's attention.

Walker became a central figure in black leadership and one of the first black philanthropists: She funded the construction of a black YMCA in Indianapolis and