



NIA PEEPLLES

A RAY OF LIGHT

WRITTEN BY ANNA GRIFFIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUSSELL BAER

I first met Nia when she attended our Emmy Give-Back Suite at the W Hollywood, in September. The first thing I noticed about her was her luminous complexion and dazzling smile. She exudes light and warmth wherever she goes, and one can't help but be enveloped into it. With a pedigreed TV career that includes starring roles on shows such as "Fame," "Walker Texas Ranger," and "The Young and the Restless," Nia now recurs on ABC's hit, "Pretty Little Liars." At 50 years of age, it's a bold change in direction for her not to have taken a Series Regular role, which she has done her entire career. However in letting go and taking a smaller one, she is finding the space to embrace exciting new endeavors, empowering herself to choose what works for her as a woman now, and inspiring us all in the process. Ever the cool Malibu, surfer chick, she sat down to candidly tell us all about it.

COCO ECO MAGAZINE: Nia, you look amazing, particularly your skin. What's your secret?

NIA PEEPLES: Thank you. Oh my goodness. That is a really big question, but I happen to believe there are three components to being healthy: What you're born with – genetics; How you feed it – nutrition, supplements and emollients, and How you treat it- that's your lifestyle; stress, smoke, all of that. For me, DNA Skincare is absolutely the best way for me to feed my skin, so I am so happy I can check that one off.

CEM: How did DNA come to fruition?

NP: I'd been approached before about representing an organic line. You know there are tens of thousands of toxins that have been allowed into our skincare, and our skin is our biggest organ

so it just sucks that stuff up. Anyway, I'd been approached about this line but I didn't click with the people. I thought if I'm going to get involved with something, I'm going to have to like it all around, and so I set it aside. That's when I started using DNA.

CEM: I can't imagine you not getting on with anyone?

NP: Well I think they were all about money, and that doesn't sit right with me. I don't think there's anything wrong with people making money, it's a beautiful thing but it's not the only reason to do something. I couldn't get on board with that mentality and therefore behind the product. When I started using DNA I thought it was really beautiful. I read about it, and how amazing and unique this product actually is. So I wanted to talk to the Biochemist who created it, and find out what he's all about. Turns out Dr. Aguilar is an amazing man. Not only is he one of the most respected biochemists, he's also a humanitarian. Everything he does is done ethically and to the highest degree of quality and always with respect to giving back. He is so conscientious, he won't even get an organic certification because that requires 30% alcohol. He refuses to do that. Plus he doesn't need to stabilize the product with alcohol because he uses ionic chemistry. It's the only skincare line in the world that uses this process. Ionic chemistry is nature's way of telling us what works together and what doesn't. There's what's called the "marriage" process where they drop all the beautiful ingredients into this sterile water. The ingredients choose each other and bond, because they are stronger together than individually. That's the basis of this line.

CEM: Hence the name, DNA. Awesome. We love it. And you're launching online soon?

NP: Yes. Right now DNA is only available through trained estheticians. Dr. Aguilar didn't want to sell it online because he is so particular about his product and how it

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is presented. This is a Biochemist who was hired to create a lot of celebrity lines but didn't love the process or the outcome because it was all about the price point, rather than the efficacy. DNA is his life's work. This is his dream line. So when I approached him to allow me to bring it to the public online, he really had to consider it. He told me he had been holding a space, spiritually, for the right person and time to bring it online. So when he allowed me the privilege, I knew it was because he believed in the partnership. And he believed in me. I loved that. And in keeping with the ethic of giving

back, even before we technically have anything to give at all, we've chosen Mending Kids International as our give back component.

CEM: Tell us about Mending Kids International, and what you do with them?

NP: It's one of my favorite organizations. I've worked with many different non profits. There are so many worthy causes. But mending Kids International really has their act together. They are able to take all the hard earned dollars and squeeze every penny out of it. Mending Kids brings surgical teams around the world to perform life-saving surgeries for children in need. But they also create ongoing change by teaching the doctors and nurses in those countries how to perform some of these complicated yet common surgeries themselves so it's sustainable.



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Ecuador is now completely self-sustaining when it comes to children;s cardiac surgeries. And 92% of every dollar goes directly to the mission. They have only five employees. Everyone else is a volunteer. I'll be traveling with them to Christmas Island in the spring .

Another reason I chose to support MKI is that in Malibu, where I live, there is a very dedicated guild. A lot of women I know from my daughter's school pull together to create fundraisers and even host a child. (sometimes they fly the child here rather than an entire team there.) Malibu is such an amazing community. Very small town in numbers and community but very big thinkers. So rather than just feeling like a celebrity who's being loaned out to a charity, I have an entire community of women at my side who are much more powerful than me by myself. Together we make things happen.

CEM: Well there's strength in numbers, especially when us chicks get going!

NP: Yes, that's right!

CEM: Going back to your trip to Christmas Island, this is something you do a lot of. Travel around the world, helping out and making a difference.

NP: I love travelling because I find that people are amazing everywhere you go. Even if you can't communicate with

someone verbally, there is a sameness. We're all connected. Especially when you get rid of the language, you find this other, more powerful common ground. I love experiencing that. It reminds you of your place in the fabric of life, that we're all a very important thread in the same tapestry. In 2004, I did some relief work after the big tsunami in S. E. Asia. My husband who was the Editor of Surfer Magazine at the time, had dispatched his photo journalist brother, Matt, to do an article on how the earthquake and tsunami had affected the surf. But he got there and it was such a mess, he couldn't just write an article. He had to help. So he took off down the streets of Padang trying to offer up his services in any way. But he found that all of the big NGO's were sitting there with these huge ships full of aid, and no way to get it to the people in need. The NGO's were too top heavy. They had to get too many people to sign off, to do studies, to "give the OK." So all the goods were

just sitting in the harbor. So Matt and my husband , Sam, called a handful of surfers. We pooled our money, went over there and rented our own little 75ft wooden panisi. loaded it to the gunnels with goods and set sale for the outer most islands off the west coast of Sumatra. It was so dangerous. When I look back on it now I wonder what the heck was I doing?! The boat was leaky, the escape hatches were nailed shut. If there'd been a fire we would have been toast. We were sleeping on bags of rice, and were only allowed 2 cups of water to bathe with per day. We delivered dugout canoes, live breeding stock, well digging kits, fishing kits, and

water. We also brought 3 female Indonesian doctors, dressed in full jilba, saying their prayers 5 times a day and not allowed to be touched by men. These women were amazing. They couldn't swim, had never left their island and yet they jumped at the chance to embark on such a dangerous mission. I mean, we were out on the Indian ocean for 30 days at a time. It was such an interesting journey for me. I went because I felt I had really outgrown any value Hollywood could place on me. I'm so much more than what I do for a living I felt I had more to

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give. So here I was in Indonesia. I didn't know how to drive a boat or read charts, or speak the language, but I discovered a power in me beyond what I looked like, or what I was doing with my career.

CEM: Moving on, within your life here in Hollywood as a celebrity, you've recently launched your "Elements of Life" website. Tell us about that.

NP: "Elements of Life" is my passion. I was asked to write a book about health, beauty and fitness because I'd been featured in People Magazine's 100 Most Beautiful People, which was so incredibly random! Out of that, people jump on you to try to cash in. So I was approached to write this book to which they could attach a product. When I sat down to write it, I felt really disingenuous because the truth is what worked for me in my 30's and 40's, didn't work for me in my 50's. Life changes. What I need now, isn't what I needed when I had a three-year-old running around. That honest contemplation of what health beauty and fitness really are turned into "Elements of Life, it's a support system for women to discover their authentic beauty through what I call the 12 elements.

CEM: What are the 12 Elements?

NP: Individuality, Faith, courage, Passion, Adventure, Balance, Forgiveness – that's a

huge one, Freedom, Inspiration, Transformation, Celebration, and the Practice. So that list of elements turned into 12 audio seminars, They're a mix of quotes and experiences, exercises and anecdotes. It's free. It's a form of expression for me, I want it to be available to anyone who might find it helpful.

As women I think we need a way to embrace whom we are, to know we're enough and to have faith in our uniqueness. We are so magnificent and powerful but incredibly hard on ourselves. I really don't know why we're not running the world. It must be because we're too busy taking care of everyone else!

CEM: So you have DNA Skincare, "Elements of Life," Mending Kids International, and your role on "Pretty Little Liars." I don't know how you also fit in being a full-time wife and mother?

NP: I've been raising kids for 23 years now, and people have always asked how I can do a series and raise children. But I don't know how I could do a series and not raise them. They really ground you. When you go home at the end of the day, you know what is really important. My kids need to be fed and need time to be spent with them. Acting is just what I do. It's not who I am. This is me. I'm Nia

After candidly chatting for an hour or so, it is clear. Nia, a celebrity who has respectfully earned the title through an accomplished body of work, has kept her feet on the ground throughout her success. As she now embarks in a new life direction with excitement and anticipation, one can only wonder where her journey will take her. Wherever that is, we know she'll embrace it with an inquisitive mind, a giving heart, and an open soul, spreading her ray of light wherever she goes.

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