

## Nine Billion Dollar 'Do (A performance poem)

*In 2009 Chris Rock made a documentary about black hair care products which stated at that time that African-American women spend over nine billion dollars on hair care.*

***What does nine billion dollars look like?*** (Refrain)

It looks like a weavacious stream of  
Straight hair down black women's backs.  
It is Basketball Wives - Housewives of Atlanta - Livin' Lozada - and the sistah next door.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It looks like a press and curl ritual  
More consistent and devoted than  
Sunday church.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It looks like a perm and color and  
Perm and color and perm and color  
Rinse and repeat.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It is the gym membership of  
Tybo – yoga – Pilates – Barre and  
A massage.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

After chemicals from perms and dye  
Have devoured follicles and  
Seeped into our brains,

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

After weaves have smothered our scalps  
In thread, nets and sweat  
With long term damage and regret,

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It is being locked up in  
Sister locs so expensive  
Loans - borrowed –begged – budgeted -  
For natural results?

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

A wigelicious array of possibilities,  
Purchased at half the cost of a weave,  
But it definitely ain't free.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It is being twisted-braided, twisted-braided, twisted-braided  
Dread dollars upon dollars upon dollars  
Hours upon hours upon hours.  
If time truly is money,  
And I counted all the time  
I've spent on hair,  
From purchase to decision,  
To obsession and back again  
I'd be a millionaire,

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

France-Spain-Italy,  
England-Ireland-Switzerland,  
Kenya-Morocco-Cote d'Ivoire,  
Dubai-Australia-Japan,  
Brazil-Hawaii-Caribbean,  
A bucket list of places to see  
Around the world in luxury.  
Cruise, air balloon, private jet  
And absolutely no debt.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

Black owned businesses.  
College tuition and student loans paid.  
Houses paid.  
Medical paid.  
Retirement paid.

***What does nine billion dollars look like?***

It looks like every woman in this room.  
Yes, Nine billion dollars  
Looks like me,  
Looks like you.