

As dusk settles, you can find Emma catching up with friends at a local watering hole in Gaculiro, a suburb in Kigali city. Emma's journey hasn't been without struggles, as he build a successful career in hairdressing.

Music filled Rasta Emma's childhood in Kigali, Rwanda. The rhythmic pulse of the Nayabingi drums, a cornerstone of Rastafarian music, resonated deeply within him. Dreams of becoming a musician danced in his head, but life had a different rhythm in store.

Today, Emma stands out as a beacon of hope in a neighborhood clinging to its past grandeur. He's a skilled craftsman with over ten years of experience, his hands weaving intricate patterns not with musical instruments, but with hair.



The burgher ladies and gentlemen of the city flock to Emma for his talents. He narrates his story with a warm smile: "I was born almost 30 years ago, one of five siblings. Sadly, one brother passed away, but others are still with me."

His love for music, particularly Rastafarian rhythms, was evident from a young age. However, fate had other plans. "I aspired to be a musician in the competitive East African music scene," he says, a hint of nostalgia in his voice.

"When my parents died, I went to live with my grandparents," he says, his voice softening. "They raised me, but there were land disputes that tore the family apart." These challenges forced Emma to leave formal education at a young age.

Formal schooling may not have been in the cards, but Emma's family instilled a strong work ethic. "At 11, I started primary school," he explains. "However, I had to repeat the first grade at 12."

Seeing the limitations of traditional education for supporting his family, his sister stepped in. She took him under her wing and taught him the art of plaiting dreadlocks in her salon located in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi.

"I offer a variety of services," he explains, "including extensions made with afro kink hair, natural hair styling, and of course, my specialty - dreadlocks. The price ranges from 25,000 to 35,000 Rwandan francs."



Emma's passion extends beyond his livelihood. He dreams of opening his own salon dedicated to the art of dreadlock plaiting. He also wants to empower others, particularly the youth. "I believe young people should explore alternative sources of income," he says enthusiastically. "They can come to me and learn how to plait dreadlocks. It's a skill that can provide a comfortable living here in Rwanda."

His eyes sparkle with genuine warmth as he adds, "There's nothing more thrilling than seeing someone master the art of knotting dreadlocks. I want to groom kids in my neighborhood and take this art form to the next level. With God's help, I hope to achieve this dream."

As the last rays of sunlight dip below the Kigali horizon, casting long shadows across the city, Emma looks towards the future with unwavering optimism. The rhythmic click-clack of his tools echoes through the air, a promise of the future beats his talent will create.

Rasta Emma, the once aspiring musician, is now a maestro of a different kind, weaving not melodies, but dreams, into the very essence of his community.