

# Role of body adornment in rastafarian movement



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Body adornment is a practice found in almost all human societies and has been passed down from generation to generation thereby having a long history. They normally involve modification of the body some to which are permanent and others non permanent. Permanent adornment includes body piercing, branding and tattoos. Non permanent ones include clothing, makeup, body painting, hair coloring, hairstyles and jewelry among others. Body adornment is considered a universal culture and most civilization that exist have in one way or another tried to alter their body in order to bring about their cultural make of beauty and social or religious obligations. Rastafari movement is a religious movement that was formed in Jamaica though believed to be having originated from Ethiopia. The movement initially began by teachings of a black Jamaican known as Marcus Garvey which mainly focused on black power and strived to overturn the mindsets of inferiority embedded on minds of black people through centuries of enslavement. Rastafari movement has had its fair share with controversy through their practices and believes in their religion. Such practices include ritual use of marijuana, their famous hairstyle the dreadlocks, wearing of Rastafarian colors and avoidance of alcohol. This paper will seek to explain the role of body adornment in the Rastafarian movement.

The most visible body adornment among the Rastafarian movement is their hairstyle. Wearing of one's hair as dreadlocks is a common practice by the Rastafarians. This type of hairstyle originated from Africa where it was worn by some tribes in that continent. The post liberation period in Jamaica brought with it this type of hairstyle to Jamaica a country believed to have the largest number of Rastafarians. Wearing of dreadlocks was a means of

defiance for former slaves to revolt against euro centric Jamaican values and believes that were forced on them. They have several believes that make them have this type of hair style (Chevannes, 1998. p97). Dreadlocks are normally intentionally formed and consist of matted coils of hair. Hair tangles together during growth if not cut and brushed and eventually result in knotted twisted ropes of hair that are dreadlocks. There exist many reasons among different cultures for wearing dreadlocks. Wearing of dreadlocks can have several meaning such as expression of deep spiritual or religious convictions, statements of political affiliations, a manifestation of ethnic pride or just a fashion preference. (Yohannes & Menelik, 2009. p189).

Dreadlocks worn by Rastafarians have several meanings and purposes that are well known. The Rastafarians believe it is a biblical command from God for one not to cut his or her hair as stipulated in a verse in the bible. To strengthen this believe in dreadlocks is a bible story of a very strong man name Samson who was a Nazarite and wore seven locks. Rastafarians believe that those seven locks were dreadlocks (Religious Facts, 2007). Part of the Nazarite vow requires that one wears dreadlocks and is the reason why Rastafarians grow their hair into dreadlocks. Just like Samson's strength was in his hair, most Rastafarians believe that their strength too emanates from the hair and cutting the hair would render them weak. In the past, Jamaican Rastafarians dreadlocks were forcefully cut during arrests as a way of intimidating them a process that showed they believed they were now weak after the act. (Barrett, 1977. p180). They also believe that dreadlocks signify the Lion of Judah and rebellion against Babylon. Strength is believed to be symbolized by the lion's mane that also symbolizes Ethiopia, Africa and

the lion of Judah. Mane or locks of the lion of Judah is one of the many titles given to all Ethiopian Kings (Yardie's Reggae collection, 2005).

Spirituality is normally considered as a journey one starts and is a process with many steps and challenges along the way. Growing and maintaining dreadlocks is also considered a process. Rastafarians have therefore developed a linkage between spirituality and dreadlocks connecting this type of hairstyle with a spiritual expedition that a person takes in growing dreadlocks best known as locking one's hair. Rastafarians believe that patience a virtue fostered in many cultures in the world is the key to development of dreadlocks and is a journey of the soul, mind and spirituality.

The mode of dressing and type of jewelry Rastafarians wear is an aspect that cannot go unnoticed too. Most of the dressing for instance head gears and jewelry such as earrings, hand bands, scarf and so on are decorated in distinct colors known as Rastafarian colors. The Rastafarian colors are another main symbol that is used to identify members of the Rastafarian movement apart from the dreadlocks. The colors red, gold, green and black form the Rastafarian colors. Each color has different meanings to the movement and when worn it becomes a symbol of loyalty to the movement. The red color stands for blood that was shed by martyrs during the black struggle for emancipation. It also signifies the triumphant church of the Rastafarians. Gold in the Rastafarian colors symbolizes the wealth that is in their African homeland. Green represents the beauty of Ethiopia by its lush vegetation (Dubman, 2010). Black is a color that is included by some Rastafarians but not all and symbolizes the color of the African people.

These Rastafarian colors are most commonly found in Rastafarian flags, posters and badges. Most Rastafarians also use the colors in their ornaments, clothing and mostly head gears which are worn to conceal the dreadlocks in some parts of the world where it is not legal. The Rastafarian colors symbolize strength and loyalty to the movement by the person wearing them and is a source that depicts longing by them. The head gear common among the Rastafarians is the Rastafarian hat that is fully made by materials with these colors. Thread is mostly used to make such hats. Rastafarian belts and scarf are also made and bear these Rastafarian colors too.

Rastafarians colors bring a feeling of belonging to the Rastafarian movement. These colors seen together mean love and strength among the Rastafarians and help bring out a feeling of recognition of the person wearing them as a true Rastafarian. It is used to signify the love God commonly referred by the Rastafarians as 'Jah' has for them and also signify the love the Rastafarians have for 'Jah'. Rastafarians believe that it is 'Jah' who created them and enables them to live in the world and therefore by wearing these colors they praise Him as the Most High (Murrell, 1998. p31).

As seen above, the colors bring a sense of identity and belonging to the Rastafarian movement. Rastafarians use the colors to identify each other amongst a crowd. It is easier to look at a crowd and point out a Rastafarian by use of the colors. When one Rastafarian looks at another and identifies him or her a feel of identity is achieved as it shows that they both have the same love in their hearts for God, the same feeling of belonging to the Rastafarian movement and the same hope and love for humanity as a whole.

<https://assignbuster.com/role-of-body-adornment-in-rastafarian-movement/>

Rastafarians get excited when they meet each other for main reasons as above.

Discussion on Rastafarian movement cannot be complete without touching on reggae music a type of music loved and done by most Rastafarians. Rastafarian colors appear throughout Rastafarian world in general and most significant is reggae music. Most reggae clothing bare the Rastafarian colors. Reggae music lovers are commonly identified by their mode of clothing that would most commonly include some Rastafarian colors in one way or another. Reggae icon Bob Marley is an example of a Rastafarian reggae star who wore these colors regularly in his performances.

From the above discussion, body adornment among the Rastafarian movement has played a key role in the culture of the Rastafarians. Body adornment is a way of life by the Rastafarians and has seen them develop their mode of worship, sense of identity and feel of belonging to the Rastafarian movement. Dreadlocks and the Rastafarian colors have come out as specific examples of body adornment commonly used by the Rastafarians in their daily living.