

## ***Cyprian Kavita Kiswili***

***Born in Machakos, Kenya, Kiswili works predominantly in the medium of painting and digital illustration and aims to depict beauty and sophistication through a combination of colour, texture and shape. He works as a product designer in a reputable shoe production enterprise in Nairobi. Cyprian Kavita Kiswili, who is studying for a Master's Degree in Art and Design at the school of the Arts & Design, University of Nairobi, was among the young designers who competed in the Czech Republic at Bata Fashion Weekend 2019, held at Prague's historic Zofin Palace.***

***The winning design creates a striking balance between fun and seriousness, taking symbols and icons and expressing them in the form of fashion and is also heavily inspired by illustrations and cartoons. Kiswili winning shoe nicknamed 'Blossom' draws rich inspiration from the cheerfulness, playfulness and fullness of the bushy Savannah land.***

## **HAIR THEN, HAIR NOW: AFRICAN STYLING BECOMING LEISURE FOR ALL**

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## **Abstract**

**Background:** The idea of leisure connoting free time makes it synonymous with laziness and wastefulness which does not fit very well within African traditional thought. In the colonial era, the idea of leisure was seen as alien to the Africans and in the post-colonial era, some people associated it with idleness and irresponsibility. A deeper dig however in history, shows the African man and woman kept themselves entertained on specific occasions whenever they were not working. These pastime activities included dance, bull fighting, games, drawing and even hair styling. **Problem:** there exists a deep rooted misconception that African hairstyles are without local aesthetic content or value. From the western view, the African was thought to have no sense of leisure. **Objective:** the objective of this study was to establish the role and the reasons for varied hairstyles donned by Africans then and now. **Design:** the study used desktop and library research methods

**Setting:** the study was conducted in Nairobi Kenya under the auspices of the school of the arts and design of the University of Nairobi. Its scope however spanned Africa and the diasporic dispensations all over the world. **Subjects:** Prominent hairstylists were interviewed. Anthropologist gave their views while experts in fashion and fads were involved in a focus group discussion. **Results:** it emerged that African artistic expression through hair styling persists even in the era great neo-colonial influence from the west. Today, new styles have been infused with the old to forge new expressions away from the traditional ones of aesthetic, entertainment and rebellion. Notable are the Rasta and the hair extensions popular in the Americas among people from Africa and the ex-slave descendants. **Conclusion:** Several African scholars have explored

*the history of hair making from pre-colonial Africa to contemporary times (Byrd, 2001). Prior to the colonial times, Black hair denoted cultural and spiritual meanings for both men and women. While some of the hairstyles that were donned by Africans during this period are still worn today, including twists, braids, Zulu knots, Nubian knots, and dreadlocks, the manner and occasions in which they did this will always remain different from modern time's hair making. Standards of beauty have varied enormously according to time and place. Yet as long as people have ordered their social relations, hairdressing has had a role in the struggle for status and reproduction.*

***Keywords:*** Hair making, Leisure, Styles, Plaiting, African comb

## **INTRODUCTION**

***"To be able to feel leisure intelligently is the last form of civilization."***

**Ambani (2016) writes that historical perspective of leisure in Africa can be traced to the earliest kingdoms and states that were established where the kinship was to be entertained through songs and dances by the kinsmen. It also entailed the celebrations conducted during weddings, circumcision, and good harvest. Leisure time was also spent by indulging in other social activities for example wrestling and hair styling. Some people viewed leisure as a period of time they called free or unobligated time. For others, leisure was related to recreational activities such as competitive sports, cooperative games, outdoor endeavors, and cultural pursuits and socializing. This paper looks at Hair styling and making as a leisure activity both in traditional and modern African society and the products used in the activity.**