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Rastafari is a young, Africa-centred religion which developed in Jamaica in the 1930s, following the coronation of Haile Selassie I as King of Ethiopia in 1930.

Rastafarians believe Haile Selassie is God and that he will return to Africa members of the black community who are living in exile as the result of colonisation and the slave trade.

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Rastafari theology developed from the ideas of Marcus Garvey, a political activist who wanted to improve the status of fellow blacks. There are approximately one million world wide adherents of Rastafari as a faith.

Followers of Rastafari are known by a variety of names: Rastafarians, Rastas, Sufferers, Locksmen, Dreads or Dreadlocks.

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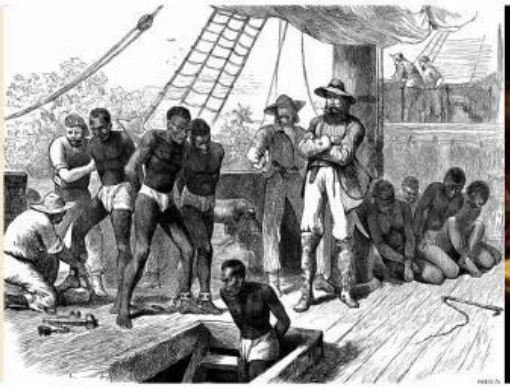
It spread globally following the success of Bob Marley and his music in the 1970s Rastafarians believe that blacks are the chosen people of God, but that through colonisation and the slave trade their role has been suppressed.



The movement's greatest concerns are the repatriation of blacks to their homeland, Africa, and the reinstatement of blacks' position in society. Rastafari religious ceremonies consist of chanting, drumming and meditating in order to reach a state of heightened spirituality. Rastafarians follow strict dietary laws and abstain from alcohol.

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Rastafarians follow a number of Old Testament Laws. There is a separate code of religious practice for women. Rastafarians believe reincarnation follows death and that life is eternal.

Rastafarians are forbidden to cut their hair; instead, they grow it and twist it into dreadlocks. Rastafarians eat clean and natural produce, such as fruit and vegetables

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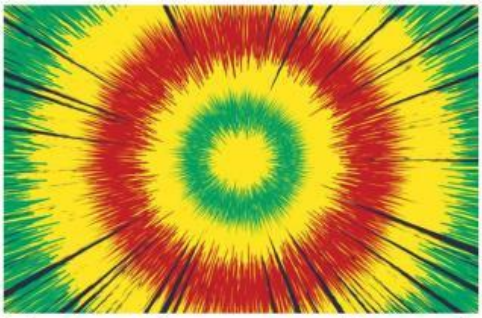
Rastafarian colours:

The Rastafarian colours are red, green and gold. Sometimes black is added.



These colours are chosen because:

Red signifies the blood of those killed for the cause of the black community, throughout Jamaican history

Green represents Jamaica's vegetation and hope for the eradication of suppression

Gold symbolises the wealth of Ethiopia

Black signifies the colour of the Africans who initiated Rastafari

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The Rastafarian symbol

The lion is the symbol of Rastafari.

This lion represents Haile Selassie I, who is referred to as the 'Conquering Lion of Judah'. Rastafarians' dreadlocks represent the lion's mane.

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Questions to research:

1. How do Rastafarians describe Ethopia and Jamaica? Why?

2. Who do Rastafarians trace Haile Selassie I's ancestry to?

3. What was Haile Selassie I's name before he was crowned?

4. What was Marcus Garvey's prophecy?

5. What does UNIA stand for?

6. Rastafarians believe God is black. Which biblical text supports their claim?

7. What are some of the biblical names Rastafarians use for Haile Selassie I?

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