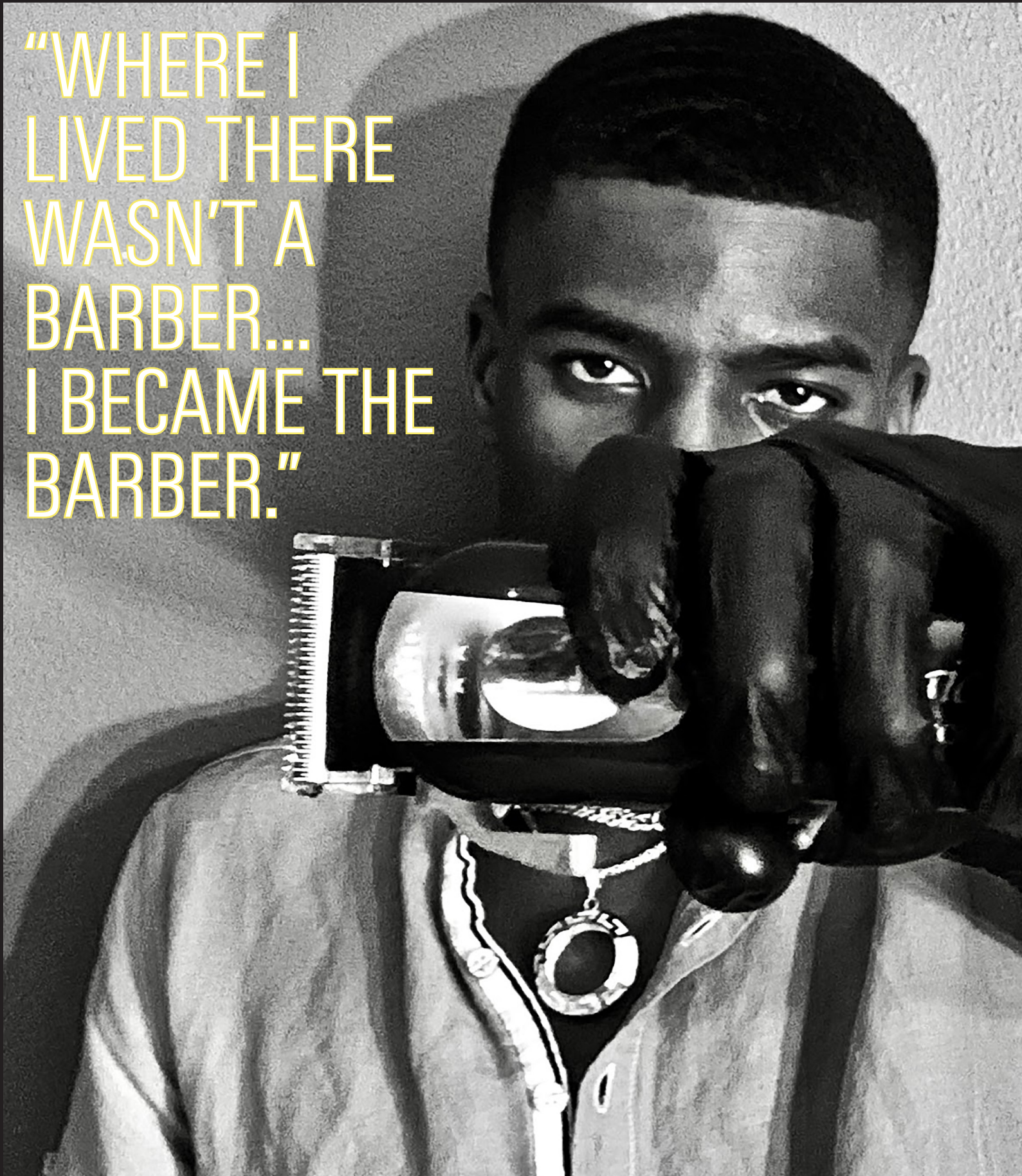


"WHERE I  
LIVED THERE  
WASN'T A  
BARBER...  
I BECAME THE  
BARBER."



# CITY'S OWN BARBER

MAISHA SILA '20 HAS HIS  
EYE ON DEVELOPING HIS OWN  
BARBER SHOP IN IOWA CITY

By Cecile Bendersa

The red and white carpets, the black wood-framed mirrors in place on the clean white walls of the room, and the bright orange-red chairs on the edge of the space—all this detailed decoration comes from the mind of Maisha Sila in order to make a basic room look like a professional barber shop.

However, Sila's business did not start off with all its success. Rather, it began in a small bathroom cutting his father's hair in the 4th grade in 2011. During that time, Sila's mom was his dad's barber. When his mother became pregnant, she wasn't able to cut Sila's dad's hair. Sila recalls a phone call from the hospital asking his father to go see the babies, because his mom had just delivered them. His dad needed a haircut, so he asked Sila to cut his hair. However, his father was not pleased with the haircut, so he asked him to cut it a second time.

"When I first cut his hair I left a patch of hair in the back of his head," said Sila. "About a week later, he asked me to do it again and I got it right, so from then on he just kept coming back every two weeks. When my brother was about four months my parents asked me to cut his hair and I did. Then it spread to my whole family, cousins, brothers, and uncles."

Being the family barber changed when Sila moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to a Broadway apartment in Iowa

City in the summer of 2013. Sila transitioned from being a family barber to cutting hair for everyone in his neighborhood.

"Where I lived, there were not any barbers, so I would cut hair for my classmates, neighbors, and friends," Sila said. "I became their barber. I started getting more interested in cutting hair. I remember I started taking it [more] seriously in middle school."

Outside of cutting hair Sila, is a varsity football player and a track runner. He can be seen on the football field with the number 20 on his jersey. However, sometimes, there just aren't enough hours in the day and he has to choose between one passion or the other.

"It is one of the most complicated parts of life, because I have so much love for cutting hair but also playing football, which takes up about 90 percent of my time," said Sila. "There are times where I have to sacrifice football or cutting hair."

During Sila's sophomore year playing football, he initiated a schedule that would assist him to balance school activities and his professional life.

"The reason why deciding is so hard is because cutting hair used to be a part-time job and

having to maintain all the clients is hard now because everybody needs a haircut," Sila said. "For track, it was just certain times I skipped practice to cut hair, and I got in trouble with the coaches a lot. Being in love with cutting hair got me in trouble."

Sila had launched a successful business, but it became extremely busy and overwhelming. He needed to create a successful schedule that would assist him to balance school and work.

That is when he established an appointment system for his clients.

"In the beginning, there used to be a lot of people in the shop, but being a teenager I can't just always be in the shop the whole time," Sila said. "People now just call me or make an appointment through this website. On the website, I put my

available time[s] and anyone can click on it to see my schedule. The clients can see the hours that I'm available and the hours that I'm not."

Sila's goals have also helped him prioritize his education. Through trial and error, he has created multiple schedules that would allow him to complete homework. He knows his plans for the future and will not allow anything to distract him.

"What I want in life is to be-

come a businessman," Sila said. "School is the key to that at this point. Even to become a barber, I have to be in school first."

Owning a business, especially at a young age, includes numerous responsibilities. The work that one puts in determines whether the business grows into an establishment that is successful or not. Sila sees the benefits of creating his own barbershop, knowing that he is his own boss and that he is the creator of all that he owns.

"The feeling is priceless!" Sila said. "No matter how much you make [or] no matter how much you don't make, just [understanding] the fact that you are your own boss and you make your own schedule is a feeling that makes it [feel] better than any other."

Although Sila has established his legitimacy in being a good barber, he still receives doubts from some of his first-time clients.

"I actually appreciate those clients that doubt [my talents]," Sila said. "Those doubts challenge me. They just make me want to do even more because now you sit on my chair and I just got to prove to you that I got it."

In order to further his career as a barber, Sila plans to attend one of the two top beauty schools in Iowa, which are Capri College and LaJames.

"It's not just a job, it's also it's a way for you to connect with people," Sila said. "Every time you give someone a hair[cut], you get to know them and you get to have that conversation of who you are and who they are."

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