

# Musa Braids

## BIOGRAPHY

# THE JOURNEY OF AN AFRICAN ARTIST

## FROM ROWS OF CORN TO CORNROWS

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We all have African roots--some roots are just a little fresher. The Founder of Musa Braids and Weaves, Gladys Musa Komfum, has her roots in her native Cameroon where she first developed her hair styling into a form of artistic expression.

In light of her education, you might think Gladys would be dealing with a different type of cornrows than those on the heads of her multi-cultural clients. She comes to Virginia with an educational background in agricultural engineering and agronomy. However, her love of hair and people lead her in a different direction. After having studied in Plymouth University in England and the University of Dschang in Cameroon and attaining two Bachelors of Science degrees in Agricultural Engineering/Agronomy, she ultimately changed paths. She now has 30 years experience in hair braiding, weaving and natural beauty enhancement. She finds that human contact she receives is more satisfying than a more academic lifestyle. If these achievements weren't enough, she is fluent in English, French and German.

In Gladys' mind there is a link between agriculture, hair braiding, and natural beauty enhancement as feminine means of self expressions. She has perfected her art and her own unique African style meeting the growing demand for braiding services in Europe, where she has worked extensively, and North America.

Throughout her multiple professional careers, she has developed a passion for entrepreneurship and knew she would have to work for herself. This attitude was inspired by her parents and nurtured by a family that valued artistic expression. She has braided the hair of others since a young girl in Africa. She remembers the first braids she made on the head of Mrs. Paulina Muba Musa, her mother. She also practiced her skills on homemade yarn and grass dolls.

Hair styling is a traditional art form passed down from family members from generation to generation in the Tikari tribe to which Gladys belongs. She was born and raised as a child in the village of Kumbo, Cameroon. There, Gladys was inspired by her father. Mr. D.K. Musa, who was a civil service administrator and also a highly skilled sculptor, wood carver, and inventor. [www.musagalery.com](http://www.musagalery.com)

Mr. Musa transformed wood he laid his hands on into objects to serve his imagination. However, her father discouraged her from carving wood for, according to Tikari tradition, women did not carve. Her brothers were free to pick it and were trained as wood carvers and sculptors by her father, while she was left out of this fun. The love of sculpting never left her, and finds expression in hair braiding and weaving. By the time Gladys was 15 years old her family members knew she was a talented and skilled stylist.

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When the time came to gain an education Gladys attended the Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology, where she got her high school diploma and pursued studies to the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon. She ultimately earned a scholarship to study Agricultural Science at Plymouth University in England. After spending a few years in England, she returned to Cameroon to continue her studies at the University of Dschang, Cameroon. She worked for the Ministry of Agriculture in Cameroon for 8 years. Wanting the broadening experience of living in Europe, she then moved to Germany, remaining open to all future possibilities.

While in Germany, Gladys became involved in several entrepreneurial ventures. Gladys was co-founder of Rasta and Communications Services in Stuttgart, Germany. She was principal product sourcing agent for all of Europe in the company. Gladys utilized the Internet to source and buy manufacturers' overstocked products, excess inventory, and tail edge products for resell.

Here her path takes a turn that would lead to her present life. She became involved in the supply of all types of hair extensions including beauty and cosmetics products, women's fashion accessories. And as a skilled stylist, she began offering hair braiding to the American armed-services women and wives of soldiers stationed in Stuttgart, a major US military base. She also offered her services to European women who considered the African styles quite exotic and sexy.

Gladys's extensive background in product sourcing enabled her purchase and ship several cars and a variety of much needed agricultural equipments to Africa to serve the needs of farmers in Cameroon. In addition, she financed the installation of a food processing plant for her native village. Today, four people are employed at this corn mill.

Gladys has trained, mentored and helped empower several women from developing countries. She encourages women to take a fresh look at themselves, their potential, skills, and talents. Gladys has successfully moved several women from earning a meager pay check to creating payrolls by encouraging them to go into business for themselves.

Gladys lives in Manassas, Virginia with her daughter and husband.