

## Q+A with Philanthropist Noella Coursaris Musunka

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**“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”**

– African proverb



Noella and the schoolgirls of Malaika in Congo

Noella was born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At five years old she went to live with relatives in Belgium and then to Switzerland to finish her education, where she graduated in Business Management.

As well as modelling, Noella founded Malaika in 2007 with a mission to empower Congolese girls and their communities through education. Based in New York, the non-profit operates in Kalebuka, in the Southeastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

*Noella Noella. This girl is simply Fabulous with a capital F. She defies all the normal rules – from where I’m standing anyway.*

*Noella is like alchemy – she turns everything, whether sad, happy, difficult or easy – she turns it into positive energy. Despite strife in Congo, she continues to build her school to greater heights. The school is a microcosm for Congo, Africa and the world – make it strong and it will aid everything around it. Education is more beautiful to Noella, than anything else. And she is wonderfully savvy when using her super-model good looks to charm help from those that can. Bill Clinton, Ben Affleck..Noella has shared stages with the movers and shakers of the world – all with one motive – to EDUCATE GIRLS. We love you Noella xx Thandie*



Noella and Thandie

### 1. What is your earliest beauty memory?

The moments my Mother and I used to spend together. She is my definition of beautiful because she taught me that real beauty is when it comes from the inside out.

### 2. I feel most beautiful when.....

I feel most beautiful when I’m inspired. And I’m most inspired when I’m working for Malaika because it is so close to my heart. Everyday I’m able to see the impact on our girls in the Congo- from nutrition to physical fitness to intellectual growth. And now that I am a mum of two kids, I feel inspired to always put my kids first in order to foster their development and growth.



Noella by Susannah Baker Smith for Violet Magazine

### 4. Who do you find beautiful and why?

I find those beautiful who are courageous enough to fight for what they believe in and chase after their own dreams no matter what the circumstances. When people do things with passion- that is symbolic of real beauty. Beauty is more in the actions you are taking and reflection of your character than anything.

### 5. When you were a child, what was your Mother’s beauty routine?

I didn’t get to really grow up with my Mum as she sent me to live with relatives abroad at a young age. Yet what I do know is that although she rarely wears any makeup at all, she has a red lipstick that she loves to wear.



Noella by Jackie Dixon Hair Vernon Francois Mup by Kay

### 6 Is make-up a chore or a delight?

I believe make-up should be used as a delight. In my opinion it is a way for women to highlight and outline features of their face – it is an accessory we can decorate our naturally beautiful self with. Just like my mum, I love my lipsticks and have more than twenty or so at home that I love to play with and mix colours

### 7. Did your father refer to your Mother’s beauty, and how?

My father passed away when I was very young, but from what I know about him, he was very much in love with my mother and everything she stood for. He referred to her elegance, which is the best kind of beauty.

### 8. What would you like to see more of in the beauty industry?

I would like to see more at the top of the industry use their fame and publicity to advocate for those who don’t have access to the most beautiful and powerful mechanism of change we have, and that is education. We need to pour fame and status into areas such as education, health and environmental advocacy. Every celebrity is a role model and it is up to them to really make a difference in what they stand for.

### 9. When was the last time your mascara ran, and why?

The last time my mascara ran was either when I visited our school for girls in Congo and saw the improvement in their girls (it is so touching to see them grow), or when my daughter turned 2 years old and said “Mum I love you.”

### 10. If you could give one beauty ‘gift’, what would it be?

I will always choose education as the best gift someone can give – it is beauty in and of itself because through education we can uncover our true selves and learn about our passions. What is more beautiful than that?

