
Sarah Bailey, spoke with model and philanthropist, Noëlla Coursaris Musunka about fashion, Malaika, and the importance of educating girls.

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Editor in Chief at Net-A-Porter magazine, Sarah Bailey and model and philanthropist, Noëlla Coursaris Musunka, hopped on a call to discuss fashion in quarantine, Coursaris Musunka project Malaika, and the importance of educating girls, as a part of Net-A-Porter’s "Incredible Women" series.
Coursaris Musunka’s Story

Born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a Cypriot father and a Congolese mother, Coursaris Musunka lost both of her parents at the age of five: her father died suddenly, and without any education and financial resources, Coursaris Musunka’s mother had no other choice but to send the girl to live with relatives in Belgium and, later, Switzerland.

Coursaris Musunka hasn’t seen her mother and her homeland for 13 years and channeled all her energy into receiving a degree in Business Management, which she received in her early 20s. “When you have nothing, you know that if you fall there’s no one to pick you up. So you have to stand. I resolved very early on that I would study and work and be independent,” she once said.

When she finally returned to her homeland, she was shocked by the poverty and lack of opportunity for women that reigned in the country. She promised herself that she would one day make a difference, which later led to the birth of Malaika—a community driven organization providing education to girls in Africa.

Her career in modeling started around the same time, when a friend entered Coursaris Musunka into a competition to become a model for Agent Provocateur campaign. “Modeling took Noëlla from the pages of fashion magazines like Vogue, Elle and Vanity Fair to a global stage. As she traveled the world, she discovered a platform through which to share her passion for human rights,” her website states.

“A Dream On A Piece Of Paper” Come True

Exceptionally stylish, of course, but also expressive, authentic, and positive, despite her heart-breaking past, Coursaris Musunka was happy to tell the world about her philanthropic project, Malaika.
When telling Bailey about how it came together, she said: “Malaika was a dream on a piece of paper. I wanted to help girls to get education, [to help] communities and mothers. And never have to see a woman [in need] to give away her child again. And really [help] them take control of their own destiny.”

To learn more, watch the full interview below.