

Up close and personal with Nabela

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

You recently launched a new clothing lifestyle brand "Zeba." What does Zeba stand for? How did you come up with the name?

Nabela: Zeba is a digital community, a movement, and a clothing lifestyle brand,



rooted in the idea of body celebration, "a self-love revolution," and there's no better way to describe it. It is all about revolutionising how we approach our bodies.

One such method was to introduce a new sizing system which was a really tough part of bringing Zeba to life. There's so much unwanted shame associated to clothing sizes that negatively impacts us.

I really wanted to figure out how to empower individuals, just by looking at their tags. I wanted to create values that remind us of our true worth. Because your worth lies in more things than size.

So, having a new sizing system to introduce to the world was important to me.

A size S is "brave" and a M is "inspiring" to "independent," which is our 4X. I feel pride in knowing that when someone wears a Zeba garment, and they look at the tag, they will not see the traditional size label, but who they are in the world of Zeba — they could be passionate, brave, inspiring, fearless, radiant, powerful, loved or even independent.

We just dropped our "Love Yourself First" collection, and it has been really successful. People are excited and responding well to it.

The company is actually named after my mother, so this my way of paying respect to her. Zeba means beautiful, and for a movement that's redefining beauty, it made sense to name it such, especially since it will outlive me.

How does it feel when you see a celebrity post a photo of themselves in one of your Zeba t-shirts?

Nabela: It's been great to see celebrities embrace Zeba. Jordyn Woods and Mario Dedivanovic, Huda and Farah Dhukai have all been supportive of Zeba.

People in the public eye taking the time to just show their love to Zeba has been unreal and something I'll never forget.

Developing a start-up and trying to get your message across is tough, and the fact that people have had that belief in me, means a lot.

You always stay updated on what's going on in Bangladesh. How important has that become to you, especially now that you have such a huge following. Do you feel the pressure?

Nabela: I have a sense of social responsibility being a Bangladeshi-American public figure. With over a million followers, what can I do? I can bring attention to it!

There's a need for advocacy as well as responsibility that I owe to my community, and my platform allows me to do that in the best way possible. When there are things that I can use my voice for, I will do so. This is also the reason why I'm here right now, helping out the Jaago Foundation; from taking my audience with me to my grandfather's orphanage in Nawabganj, to making them aware of different social issues. Hopefully that will help in some way.

As a Bangladeshi, do you have a message for other Bangladeshi women about what beauty being skin deep really means?

Nabela: It is really important and I want to empower Bangladeshi women to embrace their skin. In a world of such intense colourism, it is important for women to find beauty in their pigmentation. Melanin is beautiful and not something to be ashamed of. We do not need to subscribe to western standards of beauty. Not having fair skin, light coloured eyes or blonde hair, does not make us any less beautiful. Embracing your own colour and what you can give back to the world is where real beauty lies.

As the interview came to an end, Nabela came in for a hug. The nerves had subsided, I realised Nabela was just another sweet girl, but unapologetically herself, and upfront. A ball of energy but truly humble.

I am a melanin loving Bella Babe convert!

By Supriti Sarkar

Photo courtesy: Snapshot

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