



NIKKI HUBER

actress. model. writer.

By Ina Bochian

Photography Nick Marnos

A Woman Claiming Her Multifaceted Identity in a Man's World

Overcoming complex boundaries and setbacks, Nikki Huber's dream of working in the dynamic world of fashion and entertainment has propelled her to carve out her independence as an actress, model, and writer. Despite facing doubts from friends and family about pursuing traditional careers, as well as financial challenges, uncertainties, and internal insecurities, Nikki's unwavering determination fuels her ambition to build a successful full-time career in modeling, acting, and producing.

The realms of modeling, acting, and writing have long been celebrated for their artistry and creativity, often glamorizing women. However, beneath this glittering façade lies a harsh reality: these industries continue to be significantly influenced by male dominance. Although women are prominently featured in acting and modeling, their roles are often tailored to cater to the male gaze, generating profits primarily for men behind the scenes. Despite decades of progress in gender equality across various sectors, women in modeling, acting, and writing still encounter persistent barriers that hinder their advancement.



On Set of *Empire* (FOX)
Photo Credits: Kelly Vaughan

"ON THAT DAY, ONE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPERMODELS, NAOMI CAMPBELL, WAS ALSO ON SET, PLAYING ONE OF THE GIRLFRIENDS OF HAKEEM (PORTRAYED BY BRYSHERE Y. GRAY). NAOMI WORKED WITH US ON EMPIRE FOR MOST OF THE FIRST SEASON, ALONGSIDE OTHER POWERFUL FEMALE STARS SUCH AS TARAJI P. HENSON, COURTNEY LOVE, MARIAH CAREY, AND MANY MORE."

With over two decades of experience in acting and modeling, Nikki consistently moves with intention toward her long-term goals of producing her own shows and movies. To achieve this, she leverages her modeling gigs to network and connect with industry professionals, while also taking on various roles in major network television shows and both small and big-budget films. Additionally, she gains valuable experience by working as a production assistant on set. Each opportunity contributes to her growth and keeps her financially supported in pursuit of the work she is passionate about.

Working with Nikki on the set of *Empire* during our first meeting was a whimsical experience, especially given the star-studded cast. On that day, one of the world's first supermodels, Naomi Campbell, was also on set, playing one of the girlfriends of Hakeem (portrayed by Bryshere Y. Gray). Naomi worked with us on *Empire* for most of the first season, alongside other powerful female stars such as Taraji P. Henson, Courtney Love, Mariah Carey, and many more. While both Nikki and myself worked as featured background actresses on the show, we bonded over the incredible experience of being surrounded by such superstars during the developmental stage of our careers.

"Meeting Nikki was just as exciting as meeting the rest of the cast, especially since she had significantly more experience than I did at the time. She was a regular on various sets and worked on *The Steve Harvey Show* for six seasons. As someone relatively new to the industry, with *Empire* being only the third show I had worked on, I was still finding my footing. Prior to *Empire*, I had appeared as a background actress in two ABC shows, *Betrayal* and *Mind Games*, but I didn't have a recurring or featured role like the one I landed on *Empire*.

I remember feeling incredibly anxious when I arrived on set, overwhelmed by the presence of so many beautiful models and actresses. The background actors were all handpicked and stunning, which felt daunting to me. Insecure about my appearance and weight, I struggled to see myself as pretty compared to the other girls at that time. However, meeting Nikki boosted my confidence; she was so kind and encouraging. We bonded over the long hours on set and have kept in touch on and off throughout the years, even after the show concluded.

Following Nikki's career on social media, I felt proud of her dedication to her dreams and was especially impressed by her effective collaborations with brands, directors, and producers. Checking in on her page intermittently inspired me to keep pushing forward over the years.



"Between the Lines: Black & White" Nikki Huber

Photo Credit: Nick Marnos

However, it wasn't until after the tragedy of October 7th—the heinous massacre that occurred in Israel at the NOVA festival, when Hamas terrorists invaded to kill and kidnap young concert attendees and entire families from surrounding villages—that Nikki and I reconnected in real life. The profound impact of that tragedy brought many people together, and it provided an opportunity for us to catch up and support one another in a time of uncertainty and grief. Our reconnection was not only a moment of emotional support but also a reaffirmation of our shared passions and aspirations in the industry.

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At this point, I had been volunteering with the Chicago Jewish Alliance, an organization dedicated to combating antisemitism and educating Jewish people and their allies about the risks they face as Jew hatred has become increasingly mainstream and accepted. I found myself conflicted by once-favorite artists like Ye (Kanye West), who openly admitting to Nazi sympathies, alongside other entertainers who praise violence against Jewish people, claiming that “resistance at any cost” justifies atrocities such as the rape and kidnapping of children, the elderly, and women. This atmosphere of hostility made me hesitant about identifying allies in the entertainment industry. However, Nikki reached out to me to express her support for the Jewish community, revealing that she has a Jewish background herself.



Nikki Huber & Ina Bochian at Chicago Jewish Alliance Event



Nikki Huber & her dad at Chicago Jewish Alliance Event

Photo Credit: Ina Bochian

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Excited to bond over our common history and discuss our professional projects, we also found a way to collaborate on “Shabbat in the Hood,” a show in development. To show her support, Nikki even brought her dad to a CJA event, an insightful discussion on Jewish resilience with Holocaust survivor George and IDF reservist Gal. In exchange for her contribution to CJA, I gifted her a special edition shirt I created to fundraise specifically for the organization. Connecting over our shared passions and backgrounds makes our friendship and continuing working relationship so much more special. Grateful and enthusiastic about the future, I am encouraged to also have Nikki on staff as a co-editor, writer, photographer and stylist for the magazine.



Working together gives us both the opportunity to encourage other female entrepreneurs to push boundaries as they become fighters for success. We can only rise by lifting others and contributing to the growing number of influential women in business. This new chapter of our lives will set a precedent for others to pursue their creative dreams. Many can relate to feeling a little lost and uncertain during times of financial crises, but finding opportunities to develop a brand and a business can open doors for increased revenue and even residual income. The sense of pride that comes with creating something from its infancy stage is unmatched, which makes me even more proud to have Nikki along for the ride.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT STATISTICS

Historically, major decisions in the entertainment and fashion industries have been predominantly made by men. From casting directors to editors, advertising agencies to studio executives, men have wielded significant power over who gets visibility and how stories are told.

Recent statistics reflect this ongoing inequality:

In film, while women have made strides in obtaining leading roles, studies indicate that female directors still account for less than 20% of top-grossing movies.

The fashion industry presents a similarly bleak picture: despite the presence of successful female models and designers, men still dominate the upper echelons of fashion houses and advertising agencies.

In publishing, journalism, and film, women authors, journalists, screenwriters, and editors remain underrepresented in major literary, news, and filmmaking awards. Despite a growing awareness of gender disparities, women continue to encounter significant challenges in securing book deals, major editing positions, and writing credits in the television and film industries. These obstacles are attributed in part to persistent biases within these male-dominated fields.



"Between the Lines: Black & White"

Nikki Huber & Ina Bochian

Photo Credits: Nick Marnos



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INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Multiple layers of institutional barriers contribute to the difficulties women face in these fields.

1. Casting and Editorial Decisions:

Women often face typecasting or are relegated to supporting roles that lack depth, denying them the chance to showcase their full range of talent. In modeling, the preference for youth and specific body types often marginalizes women who do not fit a narrow standard, further perpetuating unrealistic beauty ideals.

2. Access to Networks:

Many opportunities in these industries hinge on access to networks that are traditionally male-dominated. Women may find themselves excluded from informal gatherings, mentorships, and decision-making meetings, which can significantly limit their advancement prospects.

3. Workplace Harassment and Discrimination:

Women in modeling, acting, and writing often encounter harassment and discrimination, creating a hostile environment that can deter them from pursuing opportunities or speaking out. The #MeToo movement unveiled the pervasive nature of these issues, yet meaningful change remains slow.

THE CULTURAL NARRATIVE

The narrative surrounding women in modeling, acting, and writing is often shaped by societal expectations and gender stereotypes. Women are frequently portrayed in roles that reinforce traditional norms, while men are celebrated as the heroes, innovators, and leaders.

In writing, the male canon still dominates literary discussions, and women's experiences are often marginalized or pigeonholed into specific genres. This narrative not only affects female writers' careers but also impacts societal perceptions of women's voices and stories as less valuable.



LIBERATION THROUGH ADVOCACY AND CHANGE

In response to these inequities, advocacy groups have emerged to champion female talent and challenge the status quo. Organizations focused on diversity and inclusion are working to amplify women's voices and create more equitable platforms. Movements like Time's Up in Hollywood and similar initiatives in the fashion realm seek to hold men accountable while supporting female talent.

Furthermore, women are increasingly taking charge of their narratives. From independent films to self-publishing, they are exploring avenues to showcase their work outside traditional frameworks, thereby redefining industry standards.

While significant strides have been made, the modeling, acting, and writing industries continue to be largely influenced by male control. Women still face entrenched barriers that limit their opportunities for advancement. Acknowledging these obstacles is the first step towards enacting meaningful change. As society increasingly advocates for gender equity, it is essential to empower women in these fields, ensuring that all voices are heard and celebrated. Collective efforts are necessary to dismantle the structures of patriarchy and create a more inclusive creative landscape for future generations.



"Between the Lines: Black & White"

Behind the Scenes with Nikki Huber & Nick Marnos

Photo Credits: Ina Bochian

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A NEW ERA

With *L'Chaim Magazine* serving as a springboard for public relations in the realms of entrepreneurship, entertainment, and the arts, I am thrilled to create new opportunities for women alongside Nikki. Having her on the team as a writer, co-editor, photographer and stylist opens up fresh collaborative avenues for both of our networks to merge. The magazine aims to feature and promote businesses and individuals working in creative fields, but we also plan to leverage this platform to finance commercial productions, movies, and scripted series that we will be casting for in the future. While we are still in the process of securing sponsorships and clients to establish a budget, we are very excited about a future driven by female-led ideas.

DONATE TO CJA

To help spread awareness about antisemitism and educate communities on how they can contribute, **L'Chaim Magazine** has two medium-sized T-shirts available for a donation of \$55 to the [Chicago Jewish Alliance](https://www.chicagojewishalliance.org). There are only two shirts left, and they will be sent to the first two people who donate to the Chicago Jewish Alliance (CJA)—a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to uniting Jewish people and their allies. To claim your shirt, please take a screenshot of your donation receipt and include the address where you would like the shirt shipped. You can email the receipt and your address to: I.B.Design.and.Media@outlook.com.

Due to tariffs, these shirts will no longer be printed.
The 2 shirts available for a donation to CJA are SPECIAL EDITION & created with the sole purpose to fundraise for CJA.

To make donation to Chicago Jewish Alliance go to:
www.chicagojewishalliance.org



Daniel Schwartz & Natan Ostro - Co-founders of CJA
Photo Credits: Ina Bochian

SHIRT 1
SIZE MEDIUM

FRONT



FRONT



SHIRT 2
SIZE MEDIUM

BACK



BACK

