



Nura Afia rounds up the tried-and-true faves in her beauty bag. Clockwise from bottom left: CoverGirl So Lashy! BlastPro Mascara, \$13; Intensify Me! by LashBlast Liquid Liner in Intense Black, \$11; TruNaked Eye Shadow Palette in Goldens, \$15; TruBlend Blush in Medium Rose, \$15.

Muslims and non-Muslims alike) for wearing a hijab while embracing makeup. “I see a lot of comments like, ‘Well, doesn’t that contradict what you’re doing?’ But [our religion] doesn’t say we have to look ugly, you know what I mean?”

Afia is challenging such perceptions constantly, she says, “by putting myself out there, by putting on a bunch of makeup, or sometimes not very much. I also have my lip pierced, which is very taboo as well, and [I had] my nose pierced really young. I’ve fought stereotypes left and right.”

It’s been a worthwhile fight. Last year, she signed with CoverGirl as a brand ambassador, becoming part of a major conversation around the importance of diversity in beauty. The collaboration has opened doors, but it’s her YouTube channel that’s done something infinitely more meaningful for Afia. “I feel like

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“I’ve gained my confidence and a sense of who I am because of makeup,” she says. “Growing up, I never felt like I was good at something. I got married really young and everyone was like, ‘You’re going to screw up your whole life because you got married really young.’ They put that 16-and-pregnant stereotype on me. [Makeup] made me feel independent. It made me realize that I could create an empire if I really wanted to.”

That is to say that Afia has bigger plans for her future, including starting her own clothing and cosmetics lines. “Makeup has been the avenue through which I’ve learned so much about empowerment and self-acceptance,” she says, “and I want to be able to share that with others.”

Nura Afia

The beauty vlogger is CoverGirl’s first hijab-wearing spokesperson, and she’s challenging stereotypes one vlog at a time.

BY MISHAL CAZMI

YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW HER by name, though chances are you’ve seen her alongside Katy Perry and Sofia Vergara in a TV commercial for CoverGirl’s new So Lashy! BlastPro Mascara. But in the world of YouTube, Nura Afia is at the top of her game. The 24-year-old Muslim beauty vlogger has cultivated a huge following on YouTube and Instagram (@babylailalov and @nuralailalov respectively), thanks to her makeup tutorials.

Just over four years ago, Afia was newly married and nursing her one-year-old daughter in Denver. Unhappy about the lack of YouTube channels on beauty made by and for hijabi women, she decided to start her own. “I just felt like there was a void in hijabi Muslim girls on YouTube,” she tells me over the phone from her home. “I was watching a couple of girls doing the whole fashion thing, but I didn’t see a lot of girls doing the makeup side of it. So I just decided to start one day.”

Afia dove headfirst into the pool of beauty vlogs, and her initial effort was far from perfect. “My first video was a foundation routine,” she says. “I wasn’t that good at the time, but I just had fun with it. I filmed it in my daughter’s room, not thinking about the background. I just threw something up there.” It marked the beginning of a pastime that would go on to generate tens of thousands of views. Today, her YouTube channel features dozens of makeup tutorials on everything from how to get a soft smoky eye to how to contour and highlight. She’s particularly known for her love of smoky eyes and matte lips.

What sets Afia apart from other beauty vloggers is the hijab—a traditional headscarf worn by Muslim women—she proudly appears in. But being a visibly Muslim vlogger has come with its own set of challenges, including criticism lobbed her way (from