

# The Voice

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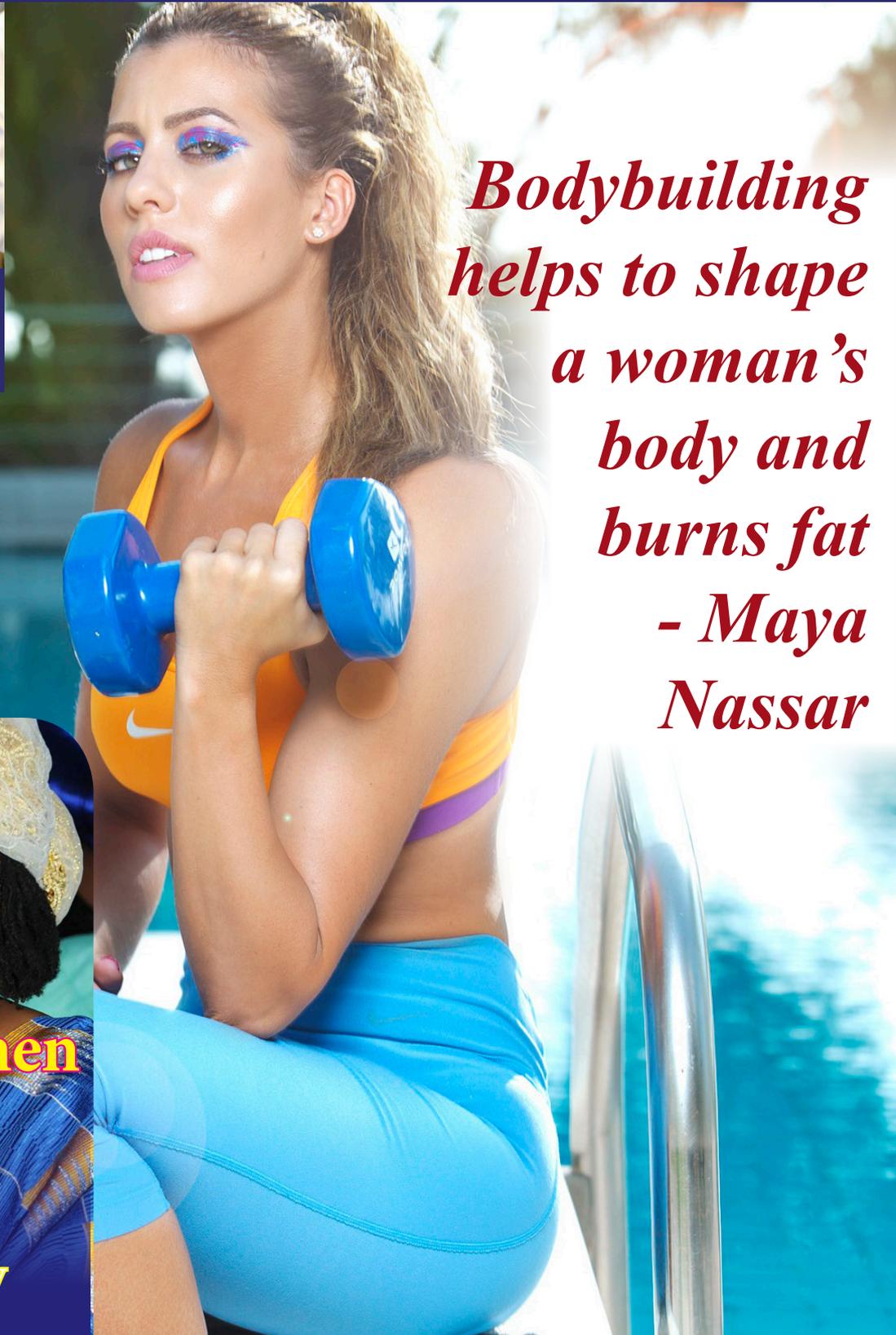


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First complete African magazine published in The Netherlands since August 1999



**Sunny Ofehe:  
A man on mission**



*Bodybuilding  
helps to shape  
a woman's  
body and  
burns fat  
- Maya  
Nassar*



**Lets get Women  
to Work in  
Ghana  
- Princess Ocansey**

*Maya Nassar is a well-established Lebanese leader in fitness, wellbeing and lifestyle. A certified sports nutritionist and personal trainer, she's been endorsed as an athlete by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports and is the first Arab female to be endorsed by the government to compete in body building and bikini fitness modeling. Maya has developed a large and loyal following with her Start Living Right mission, where she has used her platform to share her experiences of fitness and nutrition and through this has helped and encouraged others to reach the best shape of their lives. She has a Dutch/Nigeria connection. She speaks to The Voice magazine in this exclusive interview.....*

***Bodybuilding and lifting weights helps to shape and tone a woman's body and burns fat - Maya Nassar***

TV: Maya, you need no introduction to those who know you but for our international readers, kindly give us a short introduction of yourself?

Maya: Very nice to meet you! I am certified in sports nutrition and personal training. I previously used to be overweight and unhealthy and I changed my life around through fitness. I am the only government endorsed athlete to compete in international bikini fitness competitions and I have won 6 trophies in total. I am also the host of a sports TV show on MTV Lebanon.

TV: You are a woman of great status but you have right now a project so dear to your heart? Kindly tell us more about it?

Maya: At the moment, I have recently opened up my own gym! This has been a long term goal of mine and it is my passion to help other people live a healthy lifestyle. When I loss weight, I started a

website and mobile application called Start Living Right and posted diet plans, exercise programs and tons of information and advice for free. After my online platform did really well, I opened my gym and named it after the platform and this is how "Start Living Right Gym" came to life. My gym offers personal training, diet plans, physiotherapy and classes.

TV: What other type of business are you into? We are aware you run your own companies/organizations?

Maya: I am into helping others and I am a member of an animal welfare NGO in Lebanon. I will also soon be launching a project in my gym to help educate underprivileged women train for free and learn how to be fit and healthy. My goal is also to expand my gym and open in several other countries, hopefully one day in Nigeria!



TV: How easy to be a woman and leading sports therapy coming from Lebanon/Dutch background?

Maya: It is an interesting mix. In Holland, they are way more advanced in fitness and more Dutch women are into training and weight lifting. In Lebanon, there are still many misconceptions and I believe this part of the world is behind in fitness. This is where I use my Dutch connections to gain more knowledge and implement what I have learnt it into the Lebanese society. For example, fitness competitions in Holland exist for women but do not exist in Lebanon. Women in Lebanon still believe that weightlifting is for men only and that they may become bulky or masculine from lifting weights, and this is where I am correcting such misconceptions.

TV: You have chosen to pass on your skills and training to others but why the interest in Africans?

Maya: I love Africa! I grew up in Nigeria and I have a Ghanaian passport. I have many African friends and consider Nigeria home. It is my passion to share my knowledge with others and because Africa is so dear to my heart, I want to help all Africans benefit from my online platform.

TV: Why this choice and is there any disadvantage for you as a lady to do this type of profession coming from a conservative background?

Maya: There is definitely a challenge competing in fitness competitions living in a conservative part of the world. However, this is where I have used these challenges

to help myself grow stronger and develop a thick skin not to care about criticism or what others may say about what I do. On the other hand, my competitions have also helped to inspire and empower other women to become independent and pursue their personal goals without the fear of what

society will say.

TV: You have participated in modelling shows and international competitions, how do they receive you back in Lebanon or the Dutch society?

Maya: My competitions have given me amazing media exposure. After competing in my second show, I approached the minister of sports to endorse my competition and give me permission to represent Lebanon internationally. This endorsement has gotten me interviews all over the media and helped me to reach out and help many other people. I have also received lots of criticism, but when you become a public figure it is only natural that you are going to get criticized.

TV: Reading your profile, you have lived in Nigeria? Where and when? And how did you come to Nigeria?

Maya: My father and family work in Nigeria. I lived there for ten years as a child and I have the happiest memories of childhood. My family still work there and I come back and visit every now and then.

TV: What was your experience in Nigeria? Do you still have contact with Nigeria or any other Africa country?

Maya: I consider Nigeria to be home. It was always be dear to my heart and the country I grew up in and formed the most amazing friends. Yes, I still have contact with Nigerians and I am especially fond of the delicious food there.

TV: Tell us about your business interests and how would this be of interest to Africans?

Maya: I hope one day to open my gym in Nigeria and use my connections there to contribute to the Nigerian fitness community. I can also help Nigerians with online diet and exercise programs if they send me an email through my website. If my gym does well in Nigeria, it would then be a goal to expand throughout Africa.

TV: How can you help to empower more women particularly African

women to take sports and exercise in this time we live in where many young girls are looking for easy way out?

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**Maya in her training session**

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Maya: I would tell these girls to establish an emotional connection to their goals and to think of the benefits of training and living a healthy lifestyle. For example, I used to be someone very unhealthy and suffered as a result of it. I had zero self confidence, healthy problems and was very unhappy with my body. Putting in hard work not only transformed my body, but my life too. These girls need to ask themselves why they want to become fit and healthy and what this will mean for them once they reach their fitness goals. Once they form an emotional bond to their goals, they will then find it harder to give up and will stay motivated. I always say there is no substitute to hard work. There are no magic pills. Looking for the easy way out will never give you results and if you want to reach your goals, then you need to get up and work for it.

TV: Is there any danger associated with body building particularly among women?

Maya: Absolutely not! Bodybuilding and lifting weights helps to shape and tone a woman's body and burns fat. It also boosts the metabolism and immune system and prevents diseases. There is only a danger if a woman does not lift weights with the correct form and causes injuries, or if she chooses to abuse bodybuilding and takes steroids and drugs.

TV: What should we expect more from Maya in 2017 which is nearly half way?

Maya: I am currently 6 months pregnant and will be giving birth by the end of September. I will also be working very hard



on my gym and hope to launch a new online website where I will offer more diet and training tips. A visit to Nigeria is also planned!

TV: Congratulations on your expectancy

Maya: Thank you.

TV: Lastly, do you have any word of encouragement to our readers?

Maya: My words of encouragement is that anyone can reach a challenging goal, no matter how difficult it may seem. You are never too unfit, too overweight or too old to get started with your fitness journey. See fitness as a challenge against yourself and something that will serve you in the long run and improve your health and well-being. If anyone needs any tips or support, they can contact me via [www.startlivingright.net](http://www.startlivingright.net) or download my free mobile app by searching for "startlivingright" in their smartphone stores and I am always ready to assist. If there is any additional information, kindly do please get in touch with me.

TV: Thank you for this interview and for your time.

Maya: Thank you.

For contact details, visit any of these websites:

[www.startlivingright.com](http://www.startlivingright.com)

[www.facebook.com/startlivingright](https://www.facebook.com/startlivingright)

[www.instagram.com/mayanassarfitness](https://www.instagram.com/mayanassarfitness)

Interview by Pastor Elvis Iruh  
Editor-in-Chief