

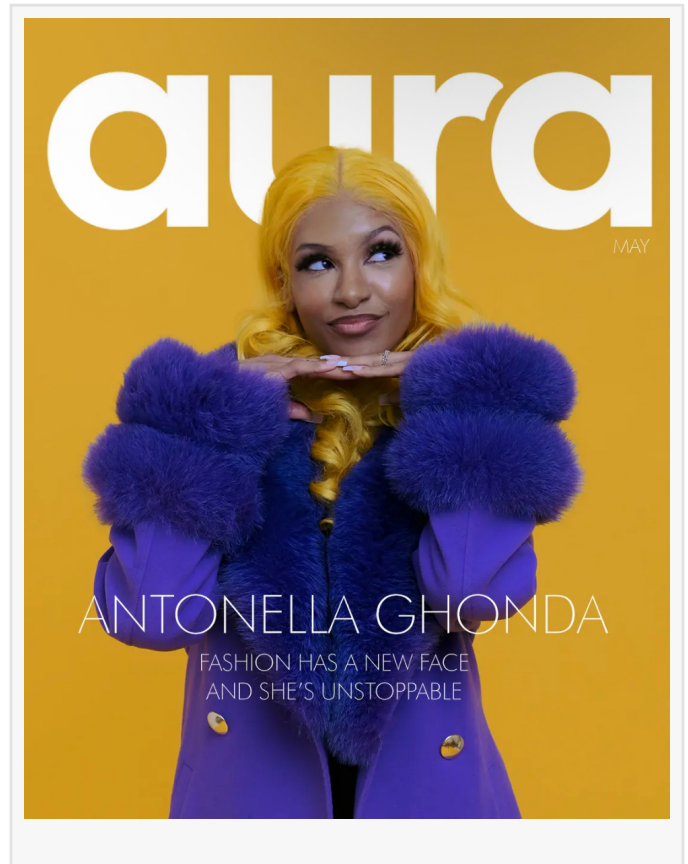
# Deaf Model Antonella Ghonda Celebrates Accessibility Breakthrough at New York Fashion Week

*Belgian-born model walks NYFW with ASL interpreter, signaling progress in fashion industry inclusivity.*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Deaf model [Antonella Ghonda](#) broke new ground at this season's New York Fashion Week (NYFW) by walking the runway with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter by her side, a meaningful moment for disability representation in an industry long criticized for its lack of accessibility.

For the Belgian-born, Maryland-based model, this marks not only a personal breakthrough but a wider shift in how fashion shows are beginning to embrace inclusive practices. "At first, it was hard," Ghonda shared. "But I kept manifesting for the industry to become easier and more accessible for me. And I've seen so much progress. This was the first time I had a sign language interpreter at a major show, and it meant so much to me."



## A Moment of Visibility in a Traditionally Inaccessible Space

“

I know young deaf girls are watching, and I want them to know: you don't have to change who you are to succeed.”

*Antonella Ghonda*

Ghonda's participation with an ASL interpreter is being recognized as a quiet but significant moment in fashion's move toward inclusivity. Industry observers have pointed out that, despite public commitments to diversity, the infrastructure backstage at major runway events still caters to a narrow definition of ability.

“I'm often the only person like me in the room,” she explained. “That used to make things harder. But now, I

embrace it. I want to show people that deaf models not only belong in these spaces, we can thrive in them.”

Her experience at NYFW wasn’t just about personal celebration; it was about laying the groundwork for others. By walking with interpreter support, Ghonda hopes to normalize the presence of disabled talent in the industry and prompt fashion organizers to think proactively about access.

From Belgium to the Runways of the World  
Antonella Ghonda was born in Belgium to Congolese parents and grew up surrounded by four older siblings. Raised in an environment of creativity, discipline, and strong cultural identity, she developed a deep connection with fashion as a form of self-expression from an early age.

“Everybody knew me for having amazing clothes everywhere I went,” she recalls. “It wasn’t just dressing up, it was my language.”

Her love for fashion transitioned into professional modeling in an unusual way. Unlike most newcomers who spend years working their way up, Ghonda’s first major job was at New York Fashion Week. “That’s where everything began for me,” she said. “I was given a chance that usually takes years to earn.”

Since then, she has walked runways in fashion capitals including Paris, Milan, and Miami. Her presence is always commanding, with six-inch heels, a magnetic expression, and an aura that leaves no doubt about her place in the spotlight.

#### Turning Rejection into Opportunity

In an industry that often favors quick judgment, Ghonda’s presence has frequently challenged perceptions. One defining moment occurred in Paris. Initially turned away at casting, she was ultimately invited back by a designer who overruled the decision after seeing her potential. “That rejection turned into my favor,” she said. “It taught me that belief in myself has to be stronger



than someone else's doubt."

Such experiences are not isolated. Many designers now request her directly, not in spite of her deafness, but because of the professionalism and presence she brings to the runway.

Her communication style, precise, deliberate, and visual, has proven just as effective as traditional verbal cues. "I adapt," she said. "But that doesn't mean the system doesn't need to change. The goal is for the industry to meet us halfway."

### Social Media as a Gateway

In a rapidly digitizing fashion landscape, social media has played a pivotal role in Antonella's rise. Her breakthrough at Paris Fashion Week came after she was discovered online. "Social media is how I got discovered," she explained. "Designers and other models reach out to me through Instagram. That's where so many opportunities begin."

Antonella uses social platforms not just to promote her work, but to advocate for visibility and authenticity. "The only way for me to live an authentically fulfilling life is to be so me, to the point that it makes me magnetic. Authenticity is magnetic," she said.

She adds that digital spaces have helped dismantle old gatekeeping structures in fashion. "You don't have to wait for someone to find you anymore. If you show up fully and consistently, the right people will notice."

### Redefining the Model Archetype

Ghonda's presence challenges long-held ideas about what it means to be a fashion model. Her style, elegant yet bold, stands out on and off the runway. She favors striking silhouettes, unexpected combinations, and always high heels.

"My biggest fashion inspiration is honestly myself," she said with characteristic confidence. "Right now, I'm loving bold combinations like streetwear paired with high heels. What I'm not loving? Newsie hats and multiple belts. Those trends need to go!"

But her impact goes deeper than visual aesthetics. "People often misunderstand models," she said. "They think we're emotionless, or that we all behave the same way. But we're individuals. We have emotions. We have voices, whether we speak them or sign them."

### Mental Strength Behind the Scenes

While her public persona radiates confidence, Ghonda is candid about the mental resilience required to succeed in high-pressure fashion environments. "I stay motivated because I know my inherent worth," she said. "I'm someone who attracts miracles, no matter what. I trust in the power of my mind to always turn situations around in my favor."

She relies on visualization, meditation, and self-talk as tools to keep herself grounded. "Rejection

happens. Miscommunication happens. But none of that defines me," she added. "What defines me is how I respond."

Her perspective, shaped by lived experience, has become a resource for younger creatives and models entering the industry. She often receives messages from aspiring models, particularly those with disabilities, who view her as proof that success is possible, even in a system that hasn't yet caught up.

#### Vision for the Future: Inclusion Through Leadership

Looking forward, Ghonda is planning to launch her own modeling agency, one designed to mentor and represent diverse talent. The vision is to create a space where authenticity, disability inclusion, and representation are not add-ons, but central pillars.

"I want to build something that didn't exist when I was starting out," she said. "An agency where people who feel overlooked get the training, support, and visibility they deserve."

The agency will focus not only on model development but also on educating brands and show organizers about how to create inclusive spaces. "This isn't just about opportunity. It's about education," she explained. "The more people understand what accessibility really means, the better the industry becomes."

#### Beyond Modeling: Esthetics and Personal Empowerment

Few know that Antonella is also a trained esthetician, having completed her studies before transitioning fully into modeling. "If I hadn't become a model, I would've been an esthetician," she said. "That's still a part of me."

Her background in skincare and wellness gives her a unique edge in an industry where appearance is heavily scrutinized. She advocates for beauty routines that emphasize self-love over perfection. "It's not just about how you look, it's how you feel," she said.

#### A Role Model by Necessity, Not Design

While Ghonda is increasingly recognized as a role model, she doesn't approach her work with that intention. "I didn't set out to inspire anyone," she explained. "I just wanted to walk the runway, express myself, and do what I love. But if my presence makes someone feel seen, then that's a blessing."

She adds that the responsibility of representation isn't something she takes lightly. "I know people are watching. I know young deaf girls are watching. And I want them to know: you don't have to change who you are to succeed. You have to become more of who you already are."

Her current goal? To walk for Dior, a milestone she believes is within reach. "It's a dream that resonates with me fiercely," she said. "And I know I'll make it happen."

Antonella Ghonda

Model

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