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Lauren Bias' Sugarleaf Winery Will Get You Drunk On Ambition

By age 19, **Lauren Maillian Bias** had traveled the world as a successful model who had done high fashion runway shows and catalogues for various companies like Macy's, Neiman Marcus and more. It was also at that age when she decided to launch **Sugarleaf Vineyards**, the first African American owned winery on the East Coast—which made Lauren the youngest self-made winery owner in the country. Bias was COO of Sugarleaf Vineyards until the company was acquired earlier this year.



Nowadays, the New York City native is focusing on her new company, **Luxury Market Branding**, a strategic marketing and branding consultancy where she focuses on the creation and implementation of innovative and strategic plans that build brand identity and increase revenue for her clients. Lauren's work has been featured in Forbes, Black Enterprise, **American Express OPEN Forum** and more. She credits her education in marketing and her personal and career experiences for giving her a keen sense of how to brand, rebrand and maintain the image of both individuals and companies in various industries.

On Finding Motivation

"What motivates me to be successful is to affect change and to hopefully just allow my story and my success to give other people opportunities, especially underserved minority communities of young children. I'm also a mom. I have young children that are two and four, so a large part of my work is about making a difference in the lives of young people—so for me, working is really about what you can do that you're really exceptional at...in my case it's marketing, branding and strategy and how can you use the positive from that. For me, the positive from that is making money and I've been fortunate enough to have lucrative careers and businesses, but for me it's all about what can I give back to give a better future and life for my children and for other children in underserved communities, so that's what really drives me. Using my success as a platform is probably the best way to put it."

Advice For Aspiring Marketers

"My advice is to make sure that they understand what motivates the market. A lot of companies think they know who their market is or they think they have the answer to the problem and they don't rely enough on the insight of market research or the feedback of their client base and their customers. I think the world of marketing and strategy behind consumer-based businesses, is changing drastically—where an eye-catching ad isn't enough to provoke a sale. You have to really connect with the consumer in a way that makes them feel their business is appreciated and often times that they're doing good by buying your product or working with your company. It's a much different era from 15 or 20 years ago, when the best commercial or the best ad bought the market. It's not that way anymore."

LAUREN MAILLIAN



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On Her Company's Future

“It looks like it’s going to be a book about my story, about entrepreneurship and branding yourself. It’s about being victorious and defying all odds in general. As far as my business, we are just growing and expanding in exciting ways in new industries. Our largest client right now is a company called [Heritage Link Brand](#), which ties in all my wine experience. They import wines from South Africa to the U.S. With Heritage Link Brands, we do all the work with their portfolio companies. It also looks like we’re shifting into fashion and skincare, which is very exciting. We just announced a partnership that we’re doing with the [House of Mandela](#). The Mandela family has a wine brand that’s very successful in South Africa and also in Asia, and we’re bringing their brand to the U.S. We also just announced a partnership with the [Alliance for Women in Media Foundation](#), and we’re sponsoring their big awards ceremony in L.A. on May 22, which is called [The Gracies](#).

The Gracies sponsorship is a great opportunity for The House of Mandela to align with an organization of similar values and mission. It’s run by Tukwini and Maki Mandela who are Nelson Mandela’s granddaughter and daughter respectively, so here you have these two very strong smart, savvy women, and our launch of the product into the U.S. market is going to be at The Gracies, which pulls together 800 women in media and recognizes three of them with serious awards for their work in media and journalism. That’s a pretty big deal and we’re excited.”

LAUREN MAILLIAN