



EQUAL  HANDS



WE STAND FOR

Social Equality  
Sustainability  
Empowerment  
Uniqueness  
Boldness





Equal Hands is a certified B-corp pending, fashion-forward, lifestyle brand and retailer that is ecologically sustainable and socially responsible. We believe that living an ethically-conscious, eco-friendly lifestyle is more than just a trend; it's a way of luxury living.

Founded by Monica Phromsavanh Hand, Equal Hands' goal is to be a place to discover unique heritage products that break the cycle of fast-fashion and allow you to link hands in a chain that gives back to communities globally. All of our products are crafted with a firm commitment to sustainability, sourced ethically from underdeveloped countries, creating jobs for the locals and enabling equal opportunity. We also offer unique upcycled pieces.

We donate a portion of every sale to charitable causes that are consistent with our mission. We'd like to think our customers are part of a bigger movement, a socially conscious member of our global tribe that is positively impacting the world.

# People



## THE SOCIAL PILLAR OF SUSTAINABILITY

Did you know that 1.2 billion people are living on less than \$1 a day? What they lack in money, they make up for in resilience and resourcefulness. Equal Hands partners with artisans and organizations in underserved communities around the world to provide a dignified income and opportunities for talented makers. We seek to magnify our impact by giving opportunities to those in communities that will benefit from new economic ventures. The stories of our artisans can soften even the hardest of hearts. They have overcome obstacles that no one should, including sex trade, slavery, hunger, and violence. Our goal is to empower them, so they can rise up and become success stories for their communities.





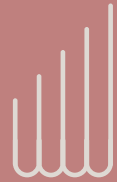
# Planet



## THE ENVIRONMENT PILLAR OF SUSTAINABILITY

We love our great, green planet in all its glory because it's the only one we have! We are very aware of the negative impact fast fashion and mass production has had on the environment. This awareness has led us to work towards offering the most environmentally sustainable and natural products that we can find. At Equal Hands, we scour the Earth to find vintage pieces or up-cycled products that fit our aesthetic - re-use instead of produce. When we bring you one-of-a-kind pieces or personalized on-demand pieces we are also reducing the negative impact of mass production on the air, water, and soil so our planet can heal. When we do engage in production, it is with responsible, eco-minded brands or done through traditional methods that create handcrafted products while minimizing environmental impact. We love our planet and think of ways to minimize environmental impact at every step.

# Progress



## THE ECONOMIC PILLAR OF SUSTAINABILITY

We strongly believe that empowered individuals hold the ability to break the cycle of poverty. Hopefully ending the day-to-day struggle of getting by on less than \$2 a day, and allowing for entrepreneurship and investment in oneself. We particularly believe that women need to be connected to opportunities so that communities can thrive. By providing these opportunities to women in underserved communities, we tap into a pool of undiscovered talent that can actualize their full potential. On average, women invest 90% of their earnings back into their families. They are more likely to send their kids to school, improve their families' health, and become catalysts for sustainable positive change in their communities. Symbiotically, in the U.S., women make 80% of household purchasing decisions. If women use their purchasing power to buy ethically-sourced products that empower other women, they can collectively make a meaningful impact.



# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



At Equal Hands, we take our mission very seriously. Our process, our ethics, and our ultimate goal are always aligned by impacting communities around the world. When you buy from us, you are linking your hands in a chain that supports and empowers communities globally and supporting slow fashion.

WHEN YOU MAKE A PURCHASE WITH EQUAL HANDS, WE DONATE TO ONE OF THREE CHARITABLE CAUSES CONSISTENT WITH OUR MISSION:



GIVING YOUNG NEPALI GIRLS AT RISK OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING A BETTER START IN LIFE.



PROVIDING EDUCATION TO GIRLS IN CALCUTTA HAS THE CHANCE OF BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND EXPLOITATION.



OFFERING COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND BABIES IN EASTERN BURMA.

# FOUNDER BIO & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Monica Phromsavanh Hand is a self-made, passionate serial entrepreneur creating business solutions in the industry she knows best: fashion. She has been featured in several media outlets including NBC News, INC and the Huffington Post as an innovative immigrant brand builder with multi-faceted expertise in retail, marketing, strategy, business development, and consumer behavior. As the Founder and Creative Director of Equal Hands she oversees and nurtures all relationships with designers and artisan makers, assisting them to bring their legacy and skill into the sphere of high fashion while ensuring the brand's ethos of sustainability is maintained.

Prior to launching Equal Hands, Monica was the Founder and CEO of Moda-Box, a digitally native, online box service for women. She successfully sold Moda-Box to 12Retch in 2020 in an exit that allowed her to focus on Equal Hands. Prior to that, Monica

served as Founder and Creative Director of women's apparel and accessories retailer ModaListas. During this time she worked alongside talented fashion industry professionals while growing a 100 sq. ft. shop nestled in New York's iconic Limelight Shops into a 4000 sq. ft. modern woman's shopping haven. In her four years at the Limelight, Monica also served as Managing Director and Head Buyer for Men's clothing and apparel retailer W Shops. Prior to ModaListas, Monica spent three years at luxury fashion house Burberry as a Men's RTW Specialist and worked in general management at Limited Brands Express stores.

Monica has over twenty years experience in retail and business management. As an activist for change in fashion, sustainability and women's empowerment, Monica contributes her time and energy to multiple causes and nonprofits.



## PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Named a "Woman to Watch" by Remodista, international retail social think tank
- Keynote Speaker at Online Retailer in Australia
- Keynote Speaker at LAS org in Atlanta
- Featured Entrepreneur at the United State women Summit convened by the White House
- Invited to speak at the Social Retail Summit Conference, New York, January 2016
- Invited to speak as a Keynote Entrepreneur at the Art Institute, New York, 2014

- Keynote Speaker at the LANA conference, Rhode Island, 2015
- Produced Limelight Fashion week, 2012
- Produced first ever outdoor South Street Seaport Fashion Show, September 2014
- Produced Fall Winter 2015 Fashion show in collaboration with Russell Simmons
- Produced fundraising event for Legacies of War, December 2015
- Served as Big Sister for Big Brothers Big Sisters America, 2007-2012

LEARN MORE ABOUT MONICA: [www.monicaphrom.com](http://www.monicaphrom.com)



# SPOTLIGHT

PHROMSAVANH'S STORY HAS GAINED COUNTLESS MEDIA ATTENTION, INCLUDING ENTREPRENEUR MAGAZINE, INC, OBSERVER, NBC NEWS, HUFFINGTON POST AND MORE.

**Entrepreneur**

FASHION

## This Refugee is Taking the Fashion World by Storm

Leer después

SIGUIENTE ARTÍCULO



Monica Phromsavanh, Founder and CEO of ModaBox.

Image credit: ModaBox

**OBSERVER** Events | Newsletters

## From Refugee Camp to NYC With Only \$200: Q&A With ModaBox Founder Monica Phromsavanh

By Nina Roberts - 07/16/19 9:55am




Monica Phromsavanh, Founder and CEO of ModaBox.

**Inc.** NEWSLETTERS LEAD TALKHATE BROW

## Refugee Camp Survivor Makes it Big in America

The strongest people are not those who show strength in front of us but those who win battles we know nothing about.

BY LILLY DASAKI, PRESIDENT AND CEO, LEAD FROM WITHIN // @LILLYDASAKI




Monica Phromsavanh, CEO and founder of ModaBox. Grant Friedman

**HUFFPOST** Log In Join HuffPost Plus

Sahra Vang Nguyen, Contributor  
Writer and creative producer based in New York City

## From Refugee Camp to Moda Boss of NYC's South Street Seaport District

01/29/2015 11:04 am ET | Updated Mar 31, 2015



Maker's Lane: MODA BOX Founder + CEO

Ver más ta... Compartir


**MAKER'S LANE**

**MODA**

**NBC NEWS**

ASIAN AMERICA

## From Refugee to VIP, A Business Built from the Bottom-Up


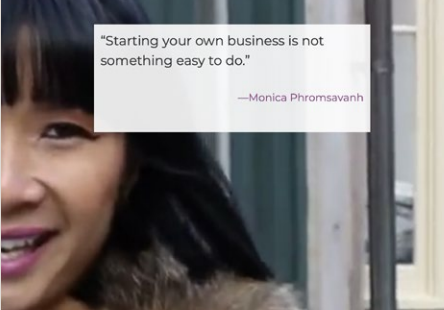


— Monica Phromsavanh shares her rags-to-riches story -- from a refugee camp in Argentina to a multi-million dollar fashion business in New York City. Sahra Vang Nguyen for NBC News.

Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center

"Starting your own business is not something easy to do."

—Monica Phromsavanh



Maker's Lane: MODA BOX Founder + CEO

**MONICA PHROMSAVANH**  
CEO - FOUNDER // MODA BOX

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# FOUNDER STORY TO EQUAL HANDS

In the late 70's, the secret war in Laos displaced many families and killed so many others. Families were torn apart and displaced through the war, including mine. We sought asylum in Argentina, which is where I grew up in a refugee camp. Abandoned by my mother at the age of 6, my father was left to raise me. He was overwhelmed by the magnitude of our plight and barely present in a poverty-stricken environment. In these challenging circumstances, I had to find ways to fend for myself. During the night, I would wander around our camp, offering to do chores and dishes to get a meal from our neighbors; those were the nights I would relish because I got to eat. Other nights, I wasn't as lucky. To survive, I spent my afternoons on the streets selling souvenirs hand-made by artisans in my community. I worked hard to make a living and feed myself. I grew up in challenging conditions, but I never lost hope for better days and never stopped dreaming of a better life. I dropped out of school and at 15, I made my way to Buenos Aires. The random twists and turns in my life got me to New York City, where I found work in the fashion industry. Some may call this 'luck' or 'fate.' I saw it as an opportunity to pull myself up. Fast forward to 2018; I traveled to Luang Prabang, Laos for the first time since I left to reconnect with my roots. I was able to immerse myself in my parent's culture,

learn more about the land that I came from, and better understand my people.

While on the trip, I visited a monastery that was nestled in a remote area on a mountain. As I climbed up ancient steps, making my way to the monastery, a group of young children ran up to me. These little children were selling local bracelets, just as I had once done. I pulled out my last bit of cash and bought a bracelet. These children insisted I buy another, but I didn't have anything left to give them. They continued to plea. "Please help me. I need to eat tonight." "I have walked a great distance to get here, and I'm really hungry." These words made my heart sink. I was speechless, angry, and overwhelmed with strong emotions. I had never felt so powerless in my life. I saw my reflection in these children's eyes. I realized that although I had escaped poverty, those feelings of hopelessness from my childhood still lay within me. I was drawn back to my past as if it was just yesterday. Since that day, I vowed to have a positive impact on those going through life in extreme poverty. I want to provide them with opportunities and hope so they no longer have to feel defeated in life. No one should suffer through life like this. Our purchase decisions can change people's lives for the better.



## DESIGNERS SPOTLIGHT

WE CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH TALENTED AND LIKE-MINDED DESIGNERS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO OUR 3 PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY. UNDERSTANDING OUR SUPPLY CHAIN ALLOWS CUSTOMERS TO MAKE INFORMED, CONSCIOUS, AND ULTIMATELY BETTER CHOICES. OUR ARTISANS ARE NOT TO BE KEPT BEHIND THE SCENES BUT INSTEAD GIVEN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS THE MAKERS OF THESE AMAZING PRODUCTS. ALL OF THE PRODUCTS EQUAL HANDS CARRIES ARE CURATED BY OUR FOUNDING TEAM.



## Alado

The Colombian brand Alado is the union of the stories that have surrounded its founders and their undoubted passion for art and fashion and working with artisan communities. Alado is very aligned with our 3 pillars of sustainability. Environmentally sustainable design is a constant goal, an aspect in which the brand has worked with Equal Hands to use inputs that further this objective. Additionally, economic sustainability is another brand ethos, and they generate resources and profits that finance the operation of the brand and support the professional training of its staff, most of the design students, to whom the brand provides the facilities to work and study.

# Made 4 a Woman

Made 4 a Woman is a brand from Madagascar, Africa. A place that is considered the last “Eden” of the world in terms of biodiversity, while paradoxically being one of the poorest countries in the world.

Made 4 a Woman, puts forth one-of-a-kind handmade hand bags and accessories, all made with 100% eco-friendly, sustainable raphia and second-hand fabric, combining high-quality traditional Malagasy craftsmanship with a fresh, modern style. All of the raphia used is either dyed with AZO-free pigments (minimizing the risk of allergic reactions, toxins, and heavy metals) or natural dyes. The fabric used for the lining inside the bags is second-hand and also locally sourced in Malagasy markets; so every single piece is different and unique, depending on market availability.

Each Made 4 a Woman product is entirely handmade: their simplest bag can take up to three days to finish, with more complex pieces taking up to three weeks. This obviously limits the number of products they can create, but increases their uniqueness and high quality, reflecting our jointly held belief that “slow fashion” is the future - and very ethical chic. High quality – both in the products themselves, and in the life of the people who made them is absolutely key.

Environmental sustainability going, ahem, hand in hand with social justice is what Made 4 a Woman is all about. And we at Equal Hands are obviously down with that.





## Awai

We are honored to work with the remarkable milliners of the brand Awai, born in the Andes of Peru. The founders Eliana Romero, Ethel Hurtado and Hael Contreras are fascinated by the broad Peruvian culture, natural fibers and ancient millennial techniques. They work hand in hand with local artisans located in Cusco, Peru high in the Andes - where hats are taken very, very seriously.

The Quechua idea of communal work (“ayni”), is respected, as well as fair trade relationships with the artisans with whom Awai works. “Awai”, in Quechua means “weaving”, and it refers specifically to the ancient technique of waist loom weaving.

These sustainable fashion accessories with contemporary designs follow Andean cultural and aesthetic principles. This includes an ecological and social awareness through the use of natural materials which are worked and transformed with ancient techniques. Each hat has two or three interchangeable pieces that allow versatility. The fibers used are all naturally dyed based on plants, flowers and minerals from Andean areas. Wear these divine creations with pride!



# Tatiana

Equal Hands offers exclusively designed and created jewelry pieces by Tatiana Apráez. These intricate pieces are decorated with the resin obtained from a local Colombian wild bush called the “mopa-mopa.”

Tatiana works directly with workshops of master craftsmen of Nariño, Columbia in a process of co-creation and respect for the manual work and the often arduous requirements of jewelry production. Each piece carries an implicit history of learning, knowledge, and sustainability.

With each piece, Tatiana evokes the spirit and channels the high fashion of Columbia - elaborated one by one, with care and detail. Enjoy these fine creations.



# EQUAL HANDS EXPLORER COLLECTION

Our upcycled line consists of transforming gently worn (we like to refer to them as previously loved) existing garments into brand new pieces consistent with the Equal Hands aesthetic. Upcycling is certainly consistent with the Equal Hands pillar of “Planet” and ecological sustainability. There are many environmental benefits to upcycled pieces. Upcycled clothing uses significantly fewer (in some cases, no) raw materials, reducing the harmful impacts of fashion production. Less water usage, fewer chemicals and carbon emissions and avoiding contributing to landfill, upcycled clothing exists in stark contrast to the likes of one-season pieces from fast fashion brands.

There has been somewhat of a conflict for consumers between pursuing a sustainable lifestyle through purchasing decisions and an inability to express yourself through fashionable, striking, statement pieces. But ethical clothes don't have to be plain clothes. You can look amazing and help the planet. We've reworked many of the details of our Equal Hands upcycled line with a view not to following trends, but creating them. The explorer inspired line is like our customer- bold, unafraid and adventurous. Built atop a muted functional palate of khaki and military green, the line still pops with infusions of color, jungle prints and functional components.

We keep original stitching in place where possible to preserve the history and stories stored in the original garments. But each piece is handpicked and hand cut, giving you a unique, distinctly one of a kind garment ready to lead a new life and create its own stories.





we are equal

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