



KWEIYA



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# Interview

## “Kwesiya”, Fanny NGANTCHEU

Interview by Alizé Utteryn  
ALV: AlizéLaVie  
FN: Fanny Ngantcheu

Here is our exclusive interview with a talented young designer and entrepreneur. Originally from Cameroon, **Fanny Ngantcheu**, who is living in Canada, officially launched her innovative brand “Kwesiya”. The brand has an avant-garde concept that stands out with a harmonious use of print and a fusion of African and Western materials. The Kwesiya designs celebrate the woman by highlighting her assets in the most elegant and sophisticated way. *AlizéLaVie Magazine* was intrigued by her designs but also by the visionary and ambitious young woman who tells us about her very promising start.

### ALV “When did you realize you wanted to be a fashion designer?”

FN “I’ve always been fascinated by clothing and the multiple identities that can be created through your clothing style. Very young, I could not wear a garment without altering it. My style had to be unique, and then I incorporated the African loincloth in order to make it to my image.”

### ALV “What motivated you to get started?”

A trip to Africa in 2004 and the exposure to knowledge and available resources in terms of fabrics I experienced there. Besides, young people of my generation had more and more of this will to stand out through their style of dress. I was already doing it for myself and the idea of seeing other people wearing my designs, what could satisfy me more?”

### ALV “When did you start in the fashion world?”

FN “Five years ago. I wanted to introduce traditional African technical skills to the western lifestyle.”

### ALV “What training did you receive?”

FN “I initially attended a business school and graduated with a Master in International Affairs. Passionate about art, I have drawn for ten years. I learned very young about fashioning with my mother. Since then, I have taken various courses in clothes in making Cameroon and Canada. I wanted to be trained by local designers and benefit from their knowledge as far as the use of the loincloth is concerned.”

### ALV “What does fashion mean for you?”

FN “Fashion, in my eyes, is one of the most effective forms of self-expression. Whatever your clothing, simple

or sought after, inspired by a mood or not, it is an extension of ourselves and our personalities.”

### ALV “Where do you find your inspiration?”

FN “I am mostly inspired by everyday life, the different cultures of which I am the result: African, European and North American, but also by all the others cultures around us. Our culture is no longer limited to the one we are from, but is also imbued with those we mix with from day to day. It is this fusion that I try to depict in each collection that I create. I really like the concept of uniqueness but I also want to include everyone.”

### ALV “What kind of design / clothing do you offer? How to define your personal style?”

FN “The “Kwesiya” style wants to be stylish, ready-to-wear, Retro Chic and Radiant. We offer designs that meet the fashion needs of our customers at any time of the day. I have a very eclectic style of clothing. I love to mix the genres of man/woman, woman child and this is always reflected in my style of clothing. Bright colors are always present too.”

### ALV “Why did you choose the name “Kwesiya” for your brand?”

FN “Kwesiya [ kwe - if - ya ], which means “mixture” in a Cameroonian dialect, defines the brand and its desire to include. I wanted to come up with a name that symbolizes my vision and who I am. As Cameroonian native, who lived in Europe and America, I am a child of globalization. I’m influenced by all these cultures but also by all those I mix with. The fashion of Kwesiya is a combination of materials, genres, and cultures, all in a modern spirit, with class and elegance.”

### ALV “What do you try to promote?”

FN “The possibility of the marriage of African materials to the Western lifestyle. I want to see these designs worn in everyday life, at work and elsewhere.”

### ALV “When did you create your own business?”

FN ““Kwesiya” held its official launch on June 20th 2013, in a lounge in downtown Toronto.”

### ALV “What kind of customer are you looking for?”

FN “The “Kwesiya” customer is between 20 and 45, traditional and modern, seductive and elegant, a woman fully aware of her legacy and open to all the possibilities that the world has to offer.”

### ALV “What strategy do you use to promote yourself? How do you find new customers?”

FN “I work with social networks. These are indispensables these days. I also showcase my collections in fashion shows, exhibitions and private sales. For example, I recently participated in the Africa Fashion Week in Toronto. My designs being mainly available online it is essential to be present in events where customers can see and touch the pieces.”

### ALV “How do you organize your time to manage your business?”

FN “Two words: Time Management. There’s a time for everything. I am focused on my goals and work to achieve them.”

### ALV “As young entrepreneur, what are the difficulties that you have faced or are experiencing at the moment?”

FN “Kwesiya mostly uses fabrics available in Africa, and much of the workforce we use is also across the Atlantic. The biggest challenge so far is the distance and timely access to fabrics. This is both a challenge but also an opportunity, to promote craftsmanship in Africa, and contribute to the African economy development.”

### ALV “Did you receive any assistance with the foundation of your business?”

FN “I cannot count how many people have supported me and continue to believe in my project: various organizations such as, “La Passerelle-Ide” in Toronto where I took classes in entrepreneurship, photographers, models, and friends who agreed to join the brand without compensation, and also all those who work in the shadows of the “Kwesiya collections”.”

### ALV “What are your goals?”

FN “I hope to be able to continue working for my brand, and make it grow.”

### ALV “How do you envision the future of your company?”

FN “Developing the brand and extending it to menswear, children lines and household items.”

### ALV “Do you have any special advice for young entrepreneurs?”

FN “Do not go alone; be open to receiving any help, no matter how small it might be. People around you are your best allies.”

### ALV “What is your philosophy in life?”

FN “A positive attitude.”

Thank you very much Fanny, *AlizéLaVie Magazine* wishes you a successful career. Good luck!



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