

## HODA JARRAH

Female Bikini Competitor, Fitness Model, Role Model, and Social Media Influencer

**H**oda was born in 1980 in Tehran, Iran, at the start of the Iran - Iraq war. She fell in love with the muscular tone of the body when she first saw Arnold's movie, "Pumping Iron". She began exercising at age 11 with a combination of very basic equipment and martial arts. Her father was opposed to bodybuilding for his daughter. She was scared but pushed forward. Her goals went against her religion and traditions, but she had a dream.

Armed with a bodybuilding book and YouTube videos, Hoda began her journey. Occasionally she would ask for help but was met with sexual pressure, the suggestion of steroid use, or ego-inflated trainers. It almost made her quit. To continue her journey, Hoda realized she would have to emigrate to the U.S. She finally entered her first NPC bikini competition in 2015. Over the past 4 years, she has competed in six shows, qualified for a national level show and finished in the top 10 in her class against people from across the nation.

On a visit to her home country, Hoda was forced to spend time in the Islamic regime cold dungeon for the crime of representing the country of Iran during her competition and flying the flag. She was tortured and threatened with life imprisonment and it took time to recover. But having endured that experience, she says, "I feel there is nothing I can't face; nothing that can keep me from achieving my dreams. It has made me stronger. One day I hope that I can return home."

When asked what inspired her to live a lifestyle that is "taboo" in her country, Hoda responded by saying, "I decided at a young age that I wanted to fight to live for myself. I was a female raised in a traditional Muslim family and felt blamed and bullied for everything I did. In my heart, I knew the old ways are not the way of my generation. I wasn't going to be intimidated by what others think or say. It's a fact, I am an immigrant woman from a Muslim country. I have struggled and fought alone and on my own and paid my own way. It is important for me to live happy and whether Iran is proud of me or not does not matter to me. What does matter to me is

the story of my fight and journey to achieve my dreams, so that I may inspire others.

"For the past four years, training has been my lifestyle and I look forward to stepping on the stage again. In the meantime, I am sharing my journey on social media because I want to have a positive impact on all females." It is no doubt that this social media influencer with over 200,000 followers will be making a difference for the female competitors in this industry. Hoda was shocked at the insults she initially received on social media from both people who oppose women in bodybuilding and women who wish to succeed. It was stressful but once again, she persevered.

### I encourage women to:

1. Follow your dreams
2. Be aware of where you are and where you want to go
3. Have a detailed plan
4. Know that anything worth having, doesn't come easy.
5. There will be distractions and setbacks but keep moving forward until you reach your goals."

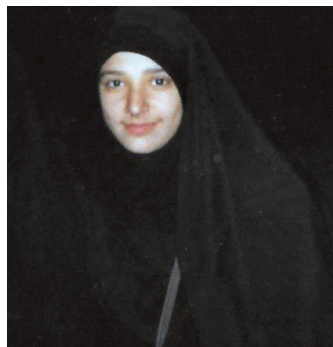
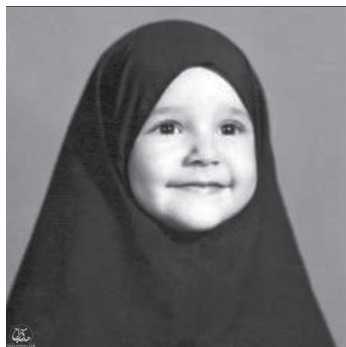


Photo by npcnews online, 2018 NPC North American Championships  
© AMIR MARANDI