



PUBLICATION
Mar 25, 2020

25 FOR 25 SERIES

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25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, as well as the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.



As Executive Director of the Free Yezidi Foundation, Pari Ibrahim dedicates her work to helping Yezidi women and families address their trauma and build better futures after the violent ISIS attacks on the Yezidi community in Iraq. Read more from Pari below as she shares the challenges and triumphs in her work and what drives her passion for gender equality.

What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?

Of course most of us strive for all girls/women and boys/men to be treated equally. It's our goal, but we don't know how to achieve it. So firstly, I would like attitudes towards women and girls to change. I want women and girls to get chances, opportunities to grow and show their capabilities. Men and boys should be educated on women's rights everywhere, in developing and developed countries alike. Demanding equal rights will be the only way forward. For far too long, women and girls have accepted oppression and inequality in various forms. Tradition that lacks acknowledgement of women's rights leads towards inequality in daily life. Therefore, I believe we'll see the change in the next 25 years. Today we are finally teaching our women and girls to demand respect and acknowledgement of their rights and informing men that they are to abide by these new norms.

What does gender equality mean to you?

I come from a society where women/girls and men/boys are not treated equally. This has a severe impact on how our women and girls grow up and live in society. In this sense, equality means to me that women or girls are freer. The taste of freedom, being able to do what you want, to be educated, to get a job and use your voice. I look around the Middle East and see that our women and girls are, in many cases, prisoners in their own lives, with no possible escape as rules are dictated by men in the community or in the family.

What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?

As a child and growing up I was sexually abused. Within my family or community, I was not empowered and I was not in a safe position to say what happened to me. This has devastating effects on a child like the young girl I was. There is a lot of pressure on us to be perfect. But the burden of the violence against women and girls often lies with the victim instead of the perpetrator. Guilt and self-blame are one of the worst effects of sexual violence, and it is carried unfairly by many women and girls all over the world. This made me choose to study law and be educated so I could be free, pursue justice, and defend myself and others. This is what keeps me going, and it is also the reason I engaged in work to help Yezidi women who were victims of sexual violence by ISIS. Because I know the pain and loneliness of being a survivor of sexual violence. Over the years I have created my own voice, demanded respect and acknowledgement of my rights. I am here now, to demand the same for every woman and girl.

What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate / work for gender equality as they get older?

Speak up against any form of degradation. Speak up against any form of harassment. Train your voice to fight inequality at a young age, because growing up you will face a lot of hurdles, some are small hills, but some are big mountains. We all need to keep going, because only then shall we be free.

Who do you look to as an example / role model in the fight for gender equality?

I look up to Oprah Winfrey. She faced many challenges but kept fighting and look at her now! She is a role model, not just because of what she achieved, but because she overcame adversity, found her voice, and the strength to be free.

Read Pari's piece for CHIME FOR CHANGE titled "Empowering Yezidi Women to Lead After Trauma," which spotlights Free Yezidi Foundation's vital work to empower women to recover from trauma and lead the fight for gender equality, [here](#).

