



Feminist *Figures*

presents:

Zahra Al Hilaly

gender equality and environmental activist - co-founder of Oaktree

Born to a **Palestinian/Iraqi** family in Australia, Zahra Al Hilaly is a writer, advocate, and speaker, who embodies **resilience and determination** shaped by her background as a child of **immigrant parents**. Inspired by her mother's advocacy and tenacity, Zahra embraced her roots and cultural identity, using her experiences of **exclusion** and **lack of representation** to fuel her passion for **empowering marginalized voices**.

At 21 years old, she has already become a formidable force in advocating for **gender equality, refugee rights,** and **inclusive representation**.



Al Hilaly at the UN headquarters - Twitter

FROM ZAHRA'S SPEECH AT THE UN:

"My voice is the recollection of every single woman that has come before me."

Her achievements include working with various organizations to empower youth, being recognized as a **finalist for Young Muslim of the Year**, and winning awards for her leadership. She's a co-CEO of the **Oaktree Foundation** and played a key role in organizing **Christmas Island's inaugural leadership and advocacy summit for youth**, paving the way for the establishment of the **Christmas Island Youth Association**.

Zahra's journey also involves breaking barriers by being **featured in Vogue Australia** and pursuing journalism to **challenge the lack of diverse representation in media**. Despite facing stereotypes and obstacles as a Muslim woman, she continues to speak out on crucial issues, advocating for intersectional feminism and diversity.

She believes in the power of **storytelling** and **community**, encouraging young people to embrace their unique perspectives while finding supportive communities. Zahra aims to **create leadership opportunities for young women of color**, emphasizing the importance of amplifying **diverse voices**.



Zahra Al Hilaly alongside Malala Yousafzai at the 2023 Women Deliver Conference. Source: Oaktree LinkedIn

To learn more on Zahra's perspective on inclusive leadership in her own words, read her article [*Building Your Leadership From the Lens of Diversity*](#) on World YWCA's She Speaks blog.

ZAHRA'S ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY AND TRUST YOUR VOICE

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“As women, we need to start **avoiding the default** that we go to in questioning our voices and our place in a room. Your voice and perspective is absolutely **unique**. Instead, you need to start **affirming your existence**. I've started doing this thing internally when I talk myself down. I think to myself ‘if I said that to a friend, would they still be friends with me?’ And half the time it's always a no.”

“Finding people that hold similar values to you, finding a group that will have your back no matter what, is the most **safe haven** I've had.”



CLIMATE CHANGE



AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOUTH

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing youth. As resource scarcity, forced migration, and natural disasters all increase due to the impacts of humans on the planet, children and young people are increasingly affected due to their **already high vulnerability**. Without drastic steps taken by governments worldwide, the youth of today know that the climate situation will only worsen. A new global survey illustrates this depth of **anxiety** for many young people.

These fears are not without merit, according to UNICEF approximately **1 billion children** are at an '**extremely high risk**' of the impacts of the climate crisis.

Nearly **60%** of young people approached said they felt very or extremely worried.

56% say they think humanity is doomed.

PERSEVERING IN THE FACE OF DANGER

However, instead of giving up, young people are being driven to the climate movement. Many **organizations** and **movements** have been **started by young people** looking to build a better future for themselves and their peers.



Oaktree and their work is supported by organizations all over the world sharing in their desire for sustainability and direct action in hopes of off-setting the worst of the climate crisis.

OAKTREE

YOUTH-LED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT

Oaktree is a youth-led movement that **advocates for sustainable development based in Australia**. The younger generations will be the most affected by climate-induced natural disasters, economic and resource insecurity, and increasing global poverty and **deserve a strong voice in shaping a future that is sustainable and equitable**. Oaktree works across the Asia-Pacific region in Australia, Cambodia and Timor-Leste mobilizing students and activists to promote positive policy and social change.

INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGNING

Oaktree ran a **fundraiser campaign** that challenged participants to **“live without”** and forgo basic resources to **recognize the toil** that it takes on people living in **poverty**. For 5 days, young people raised money and awareness for **inequality**, getting active in the conversation about **global injustice** and the ways individuals can be involved in change.



If you wish to support Oaktree’s work, you may [donate here](#).

YOUTH SOLIDARITY FUND

The **Oaktree Youth Solidarity Fund (OYSF)** is a collaboration between Oaktree and youth-led organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. This partnership aims to **support local development projects** initiated by these organizations, addressing community concerns. The Solidarity Fund provides funding for **grassroots organizations** and helps connect smaller organizations with the network, focusing on **youth-youth collaboration and empowerment**.



Oaktree volunteers. Source: Oaktree LinkedIn

Would you like to learn more?

Take a look at some of our members' work on the topic:

Policy Brief: Understanding the Intersection of Gender and Climate Justice in the SWANA Region

Article: Climate change and gender-based violence: An invisible nexus? Analysis of ecological stress-induced GBV in the Sundarbans

At **Politics4Her**, we acknowledge the **disproportionate** and increasing toll that climate change has on **young people** and we encourage them to get involved with the climate justice movement.

As we fight for new legislation, changing policies and international adaptation, it's vital that young people have a say in shaping a more **sustainable** and **equitable future** for themselves. It is crucial to recognize the intersections of **racism**, **gender equality** and **poverty** when addressing the effects of climate change. The problems of **forced migration**, access to **resources** and **climate-related conflict** will all have a high impact on youth, especially **young women and girls**.

Supporting Zahra's approach of **collective youth action** and raising awareness, we believe that **young people** can encourage long-term investment in climate solutions and build a more **sustainable global future**.

Who inspires you?

If you would like to nominate a young feminist changemaker to be highlighted in our monthly volume, **fill out this form**.

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