



[#] the sameness project

Four years ago, **Lina Nahhas** retired from a successful 15-year career in market research in the Middle East after founding and growing to acquisition scale, the first all-Arab boutique agency in the region, Siraj, to follow her dreams and passions. Lina bid farewell to the corporate world to focus on building this Social project, which involves raising consciousness and getting in touch with our humanity through events in the arts, educational workshops, and a community oriented hub-in-the-making.

Q What inspired you to start The Sameness Project?

My role as a mother, my visit to Palestine as well as from my work as a Qualitative researcher which has taught me that irrespective of gender, nationality, social background, age, religion, lifestyle or any other distinguishing "variables" we are all are the same in our desires, passions and needs, as well as in our obsessions, vulnerabilities and anguish – whether in relation to ourselves or our loved ones. This lesson gives me hope for a better future, and only if the whole world wakes up fully to it as a significant reality, for the survival of our future generations. So, whilst we celebrate our diversity and uniqueness through our distinguishing identities, let's also remember to celebrate our ONE humanity; that allows us to see the 'other' as we see ourselves free of any layers. And with that, value their life as we value ours, granting everyone, including ourselves, the right to celebrate life with a pure heart, with passion and compassion – simply to be alive.

Q What is the most innovative activity you have organised?

The Sameness Project has been up and running from July 2012. Since then we have had two community initiatives. First one was called "Water for Workers". We distributed cold bottles of water with a sticker saying "Thank You" in six different languages (Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Tagalog, English and Arabic) to whoever was



working outside in the sun. The second initiative is called Soles and Stories, in collaboration with TOMS shoes. We gave blank canvas shoes to domestic workers from nine different countries. The nine participants were asked to decorate and artistically alter the pair of shoes, which was then exhibited at a one-off Soles and Stories event held at Dubai's Traffic Gallery. All the proceedings from the sale went to the respective artist of the shoes.

Q Do you have any future development for the sameness project in UAE?

Our next initiative is regarding taxi drivers wherein they get a booklet depicting how they can do a five-minute exercise while they are seated which will be led by volunteering personal trainers. Another project is called 'Labourers Bus Art'. All their buses are white and dull so we are trying to get them to paint their buses with their dreams and stories. ■

The Sameness Project

