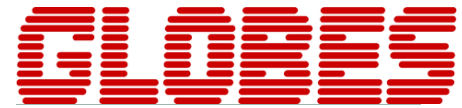


Employing Minorities in Israel



By: Liat Ron

An interview with Nawa Jahshan Batshon, CEO of Co-Impact, an organization focused on making a breakthrough in Arab employment in the private business sector • about growing up in an equal home, the aspirations and the difficulty of finding work or even an internship just because of her cultural affiliation.

I: Look to the distance, am thorough, energetic, fast, ambitious and accomplished. I Learn fast and love to be groundbreaking.

Family: My mom, Tagrid, comes from a respectable family from Shfar'am. My grandfather was an arbitrator and mediator, he owned a business of selling lumber to the coal industry. My grandmother was considered very feminist – she was a teacher and played the piano. My mother was one of the first women to be sent to Haifa High School, to study psychology and English at the university, and then did another bachelor's degree in law. Today she is the legal consultant of the Women's Lobby. My father's family, Adib, from Wadi Salib in Haifa, a big family that my grandfather had a hard time providing for as a construction worker. My father studied acting in "Beit Tzvi" when there were no other Arab students, and worked in carpentry. Upon graduation he went to study acting and directing in London. He established the Arab theater "Al-Sarayya" in Jaffa and managed it for 20 years and today he runs the "Al-Hayat" theater in Ramla. For years he ran a youth hostel and that's how he provided for us.

Childhood: We are three sisters. We grew up in Jaffa, in a mixed neighborhood, playing outdoors with friends, after-school activities, orthodox scouts, studying hard at the Christian school and then in high school expanding physics studies at Tara Santa. I was an outstanding student and I was fortunate to grow up in an equal home. I wanted to be a lawyer like my mother, but when I saw how many hours she spent working on paperwork, I realized it wasn't for me. Although my father thought I had a future in the field of acting, I chose to study behavioral science, psychology, sociology, and anthropology at Ben Gurion University. At the end of my undergraduate degree, I began my MA in organizational psychology, worked as a TA and wrote my research on successful Arab female executives.



Nawa Jahshan Batshon / Photographer: Eyal Izhar



Career: I sent my resume to apply for internships, and I didn't get even one call-back. I was the only one of all my Jewish friends to finish my degree with no job. At the end, my Professor found me an internship at an Institute of Organizational Consulting. I moved on to become a team manager at Cellcom, because I couldn't find a job in my field, and I progressed to be a project manager. I was accepted into a special training program in Business Administration at Duke University in North Carolina on behalf of the US Embassy and was an intern in a diversity team at Granger, where I was exposed to the field of employment diversity. After six months abroad, I returned to Cellcom.

Employment Diversity: A very common subject in the United States, where there is strict legislation regulating the employment of minorities, it is a shame that in Israel it only refers to people with disabilities. After four years, I left to become a mentor and consultant in an Arab company for employment integration.

Jacob: My husband. He has a bachelor's degree in economics, law and accounting, and was CFO of "Orev" Technologies. We met through a friend when I was 27 and before my MA in the US. We went out a few times and kept in touch. We continued to be together when I returned. We got married and moved to Lod, next to his family. A few years later, after many refusals to sell to us because we are Arabs, we managed to buy a house in Beer Yaakov and we live there with our three children.



Co-Impact: I founded Meward Resources - an organizational consulting firm, and did some diversification projects for Bank Hapoalim, Bezeq and Clalit. The founders of Co-Impact, Yifat Ovadia and Dr. Sameer Kassem heard about me from Bank Hapoalim and connected me for an in-depth study of the employment of Arabs in Israel's private sector. I was drawn into the organization, closed my firm, moved forward and was appointed CEO. Co-Impact is a nonprofit based on donations and government support and focuses on creating a breakthrough in Arab employment in the private business sector, but is not a placement company. Against the background of which only 5% of all employees in the business sector are Arab and only 0.3% of them are in middle management positions, our goal is to show companies how they can increase profit margins, open new markets thanks to employing Arabs who are very loyal employees, and bring to light that there are quite a few brilliant talents from Arab society in the technology field. We have two branches and we employ 35 employees. We consult, among others, Coca-Cola, Tnuva, Osem, Amdocs, Deloitte, Strauss and Colmobil.

Leisure: Very little, and is dedicated to my family and my children.

Perception of the future: To influence and open up opportunities for Arab employees, while simultaneously improving relations between Jews and Arabs.

The article was translated from Hebrew. For the original please press [here](#).