



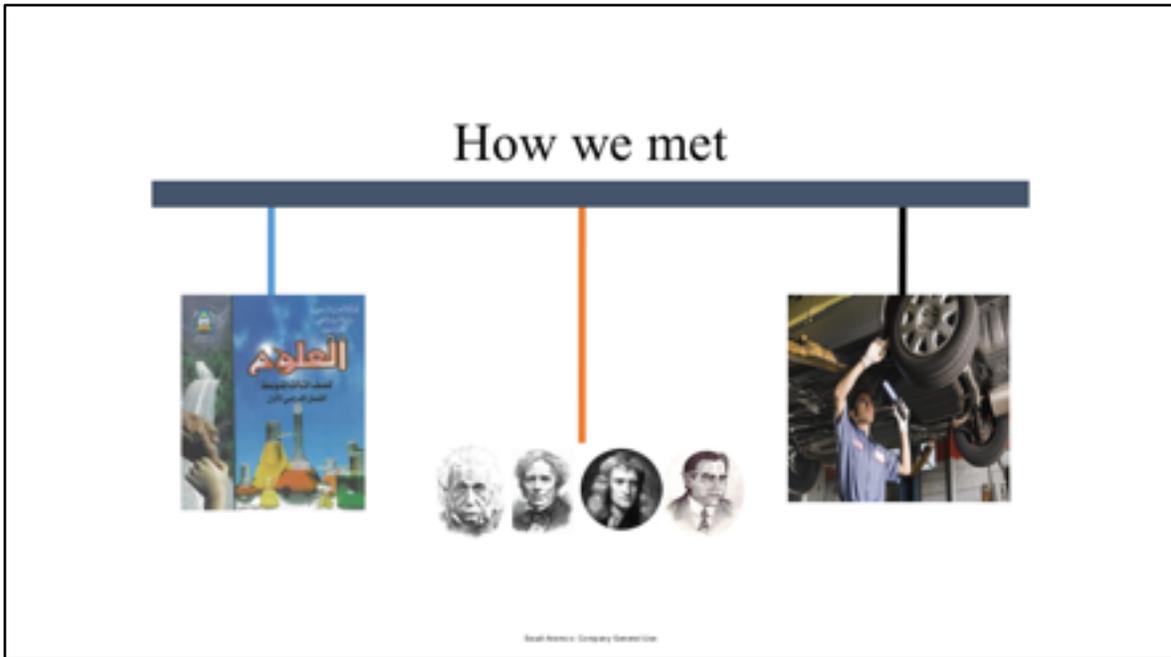
Don't Let the Stereotype Define You.

A Qudwa Speech by Nujood Al-Mulla

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Good afternoon everyone, let me first start by saying thank you very much for being here today, I am extremely honored to be delivering this speech before you.

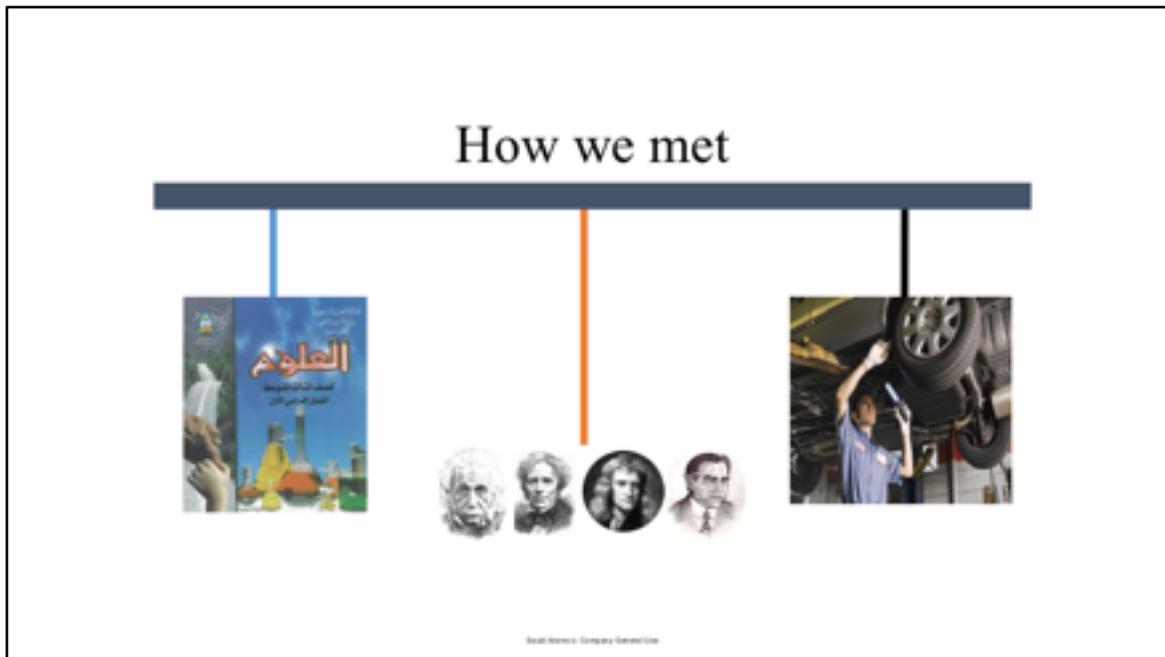
So the topic I would like to discuss with you today is Don't Let the Stereotype Define You. That's because, unfortunately, it is too often for us to submit to different stereotypes and allow the general norm and external expectations to make our decisions on behalf of us. **That** is one of the most dangerous things you can do in your life.



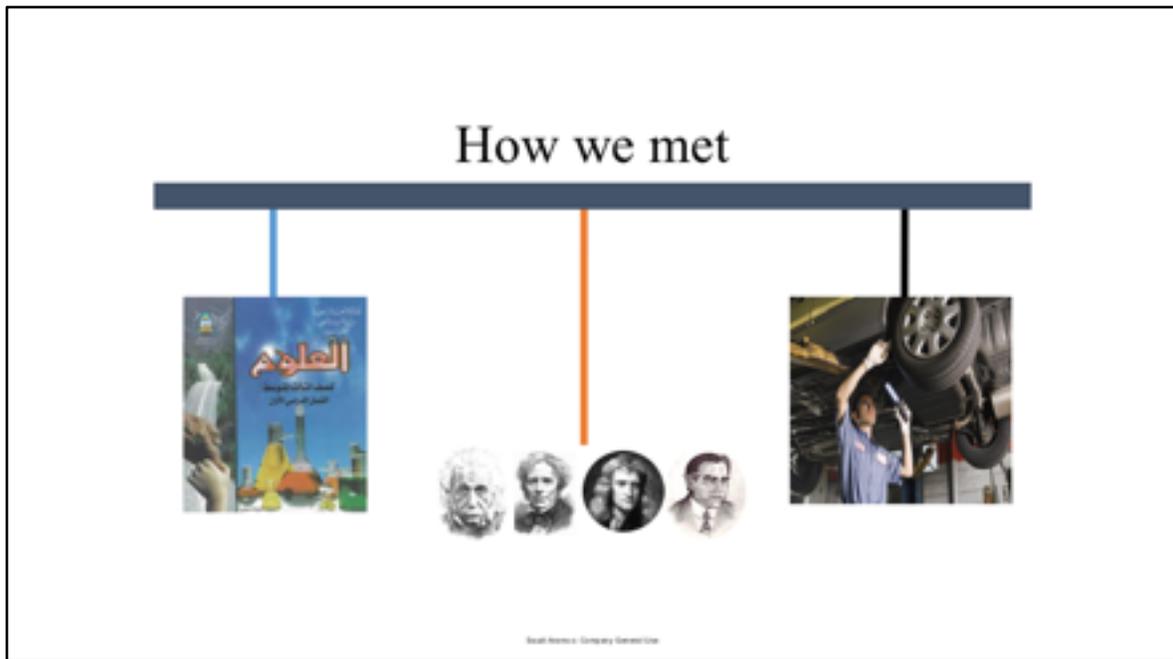
The topic is very close to heart, I think everyone here can relate to some type of stereotype, whether you're a woman, a man, in a certain profession, from a certain nationality, or with a certain background. It is fascinating how many boxes and labels exist out there. Everyone who knows me of course, knows that I am generally biased towards women stereotypes but that's because I never really got it. I mean maybe, maybe I understand how certain stereotypes were formed against certain minorities, and I am not at all belittling or saying that these stereotypes are okay or fine but I would just like to emphasize that women form half of the human race. It is just men and women out there, and each person typically has both a mother and father and as ridiculous as that sounds, women were never a minority, we weren't born with spatulas and aprons when we were first born, these limitations are purely social.

How I found my passion:

So My name is Nujood Al Mulla, I am a member of the 4th batch of the Young Leaders Advisory Board, you may also know it as YLAB. I currently work in the Process & Controls Systems Department. So I would like to begin by giving you a brief about who I am and how I made some of the choices that I have made.



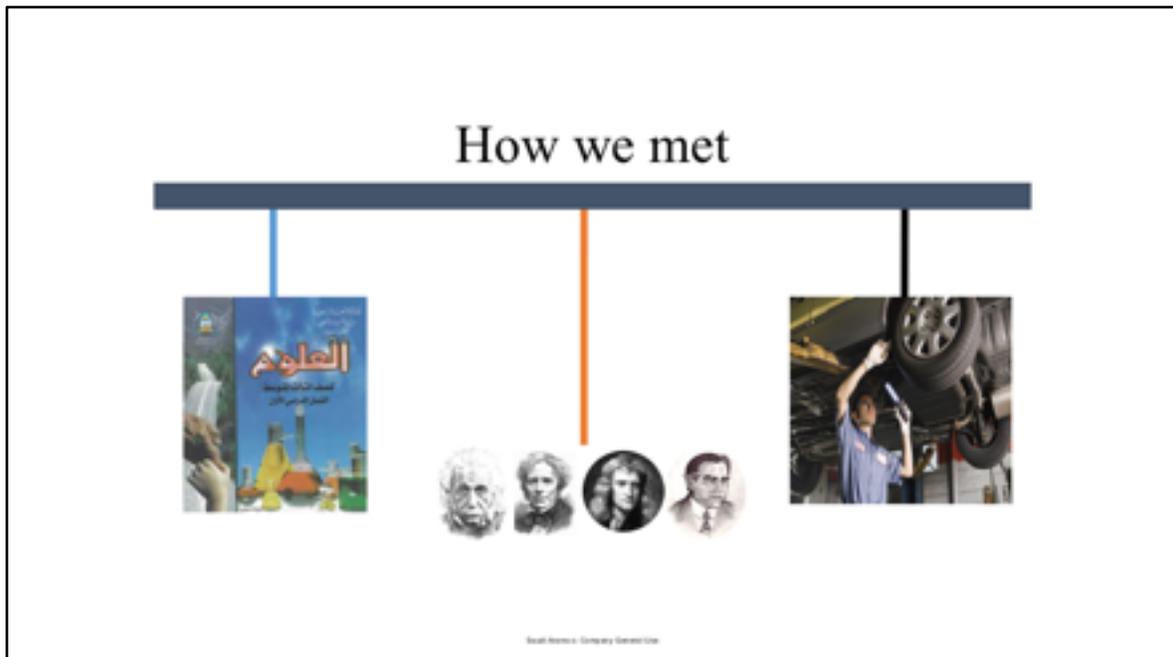
Throughout middle school, all the sciences were lumped up under one book: Science. Yes they had different chapters but being exposed to organic chemistry along side the human body and mixed a tiny bit with geology seemed like a messy combination of a subject which the majority of its topic were extremely uninteresting to me. As I entered high school, I was given the choice to choose between Physics, Biology and Chemistry and I opted towards Physics. As the teacher started going into Bohr's atoms, Faraday's electromagnetism, Einstein's theory of relativity and Newton's equations of motion, I saw a beautiful combination of logic and wonder. This was it, I found my calling, It was Physics. Researching about physics brought back that feeling of messiness that I initially developed towards science, too scattered, it needed to be more focused, and it needed to be real, those theories I learned answered a lot of my questions about the universe but I wanted to take those answers and build something with them, turn them from abstract thought into solid substance.



So I started rethinking the whole major, I knew I wanted the field of physics, but I knew I wanted something practical and not theory based, and I started reading about Engineering.

Now What on Earth is Engineering? No really, what is it? I must've asked this question to at least a dozen people and couldn't get a single clear and direct answer, the most common answer was it's where you build stuff to develop solutions. Ok, close enough. Mechanical combines physics, maths, design and application. Ok, perfect! So Mechanical Engineering it was. Suddenly this image started to pop in my head, but I popped it back up because it was the only major I saw myself in. Now, imagine my surprise when I went to university, got inside the class and found out that it was me and just three other girls in the class. Now you need to bare in mind that I have studied here all my life, the idea of mixed ed. was traumatizing enough let alone being a minority in the class. AWWH, the horror.

As professors started to joke about the fact that it's a boys major and that only ugly girls go to engineering I realized, I never asked the question, who goes into mechanical engineering, and thank god I never did. Had I did, I would've know for sure that it is mostly a boys club and I know, that at the time, my decision might have been influenced.



Slowly, I started realizing that there is some type of spotlight that accompanies you when you go into mechanical engineering. Every time you tell a person what you do, people either clap or question your entire life. You know what I call that, **low standards**.

The general expectations of you as a female are way below the bar they should be on, you surprise people when you have a strong personality, you surprise people when you are outspoken, you surprise people when you have ambition and if you let it get to you, you'll stop surprising people and just conform to their version of the norm. unfortunately, out of all the stereotypes that exist, we got stuck with **she's less**.

Irony in Physics:

If Physics has taught us anything, it's that the world is limitless. It physically is. The skies are full of black holes and the earth is full of unexplored laws waiting to be discovered. What we do with these secrets and possibilities is what defines our current reality. At this very moment, there are people working on time travel, invisibility, teleportation, telepathy. All we choose to believe to be fiction but to them it's not. It's the reality they choose to believe. So how is it that our social construct has more limitations and is way more rigid than the rules of the universe? How is it that this is the reality we are choosing for our selves?



So I ask of you today to be as open minded about people and about your potential as earth is allowing us to be with its once untouchable laws. Don't ever let these abstract beliefs and stereotypes define who you are.