Meet Claudia Akel of Social Impact Movement in Allapattah

Today we’d like to introduce you to Claudia Akel.
Claudia, can you briefly walk us through your story – how you started and how you got to where you are today.

Daughter of a Syrian immigrant family, born and raised in Brazil, I grew up inside the production lines of couches, coffee tables, and chairs. My dad used to take myself and my brother to walk through the furniture plant owned by my family. By the time I turned 13, I was working on my Saturdays trying to grasp my dad’s lessons of sales and management, learned through his school of life. Vivid memories of the immense piles of fabrics, the smell of fresh-made foam, and the sounds of wood cutting machines bring back my origins while recalling those many dinner gatherings eating Kibe, Kafta, and Tabouli. Sales and negotiation skills were well-nurtured traits among my family.

I often tell that part of my story not only because it helps with the introduction, but mostly because it presents the rooted values I’ve been carrying throughout my life: family, entrepreneurship, and learning. After many years of living in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and the Dominican Republic, I moved to the United States in 2013, with my two teenage children to pursue a career change I have dreamed about. The UM Masters’ of Community and Social Change program was a toolkit for social change and has ignited my desire to raise awareness for social justice and sustainability causes. In February 2016, I founded Social Impact Movement.

Has it been a smooth road?
Being a social entrepreneur is not an easy task. It requires a high level of persistence, focus, and reiteration. Not many people know that in the early days of Social Impact Movement, we were a marketplace platform connecting people to social causes. It took us a year to understand the best way to deliver our mission would be by linking Miami to the global conversation. The Sustainable Development Goals were the chosen framework to make that happen.

Please tell us about Social Impact Movement.

In February 2016, I founded Social Impact Movement, a catalyst for social change in Miami. In May 2018, we integrated the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our core programs, creating and fomenting spaces for individuals and companies to develop their social impact by promoting the SDGs with local partners.

In the past two years, we have created more than 40 events and workshops with more than 600 attendants and 1000 connections. Together with our Board, interns, and volunteers, we are a group of 15 changemakers who are creating a better Miami for us and our future generations.

Great partnerships were built – CIC Miami, Venture Cafe Miami, the United Nations Association of Miami, Match4Action Foundation, The Women’s Fund of Miami-Dade, University of Miami, FIU, and Lynn-Watson Institute among them.
Last year we were featured at the INNOVATE MIAMI book as social innovators for promoting the SDGs.

There are two things I am really proud of Social Impact Movement:

1) Our programs inspire a rippling effect on the SDGs topic. Many individuals and company leaders who attended our events started paying attention to the SDGs inside their organizations, identifying which goals they align with, and be aware of how to progress these goals.

2) We are a connector hub that attracts a high-quality team of collaborators. To them our deepest gratitude, we couldn’t have reached that far without them.

Is our city a good place to do what you do?

I am an immigrant who has decided to establish my social venture in Miami. I believe in the capacity of Miami to thrive and reinvent. Local challenges seem hard to overcome, but when you look at your side, you discover a growing group of conscious entrepreneurs charting and fomenting new opportunities for others to come. This is very promising. As of now, the pandemic evidenced how collaboration and solidarity are essential to our collective growth. As Lise Kingo, the former CEO of the UN Global Compact said this week during the UN Global Compact Summit, we must run our businesses in harmony with the world, making the issues of the world the issues of our own businesses.
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CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MONTH

SDGs In Miami:
AMBASSADOR SERIES
SDG #5 GENDER EQUALITY

From global to local: Miami’s progress towards achieving SDG #5

March 7th, 2019 6:30 pm
Venture Cafe Miami - Deering Room
1951 NW 7th Ave, Miami FL 33136

Join us to learn:

• What the Sustainable Development Goals are
• Where Miami stands in reference to the targets and what progress is still to be made
• What you can do to help advance the progress

On our panel:

Vicki López
Alexandra Figueredo
Maria Ilcheva

Moderated by
Cindy Makita
SIM SDG#5 Ambassador
JOIN US FOR
Virtual Watchparty
Movie Screening followed by a
Discussion Circle about Social
Entrepreneurship
with Director Mara Mourão.

May 4th
6:00 PM

10 DAYS OF CONNECTION
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS