



**INVENTORY** RAZAN AL MUBARAK  
CONSERVATIONIST

**‘As we lose nature we lose ourselves. As we chip away at it, we are diluting our own spirit’**

**Razan Al Mubarak, 41, is the managing director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, set up by the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, and the managing director of the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi. She was recognised as one of the top 100 Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum in 2018.**

**What was your childhood or earliest ambition?**

To be the female version of Indiana Jones.

**Private school or state school?**

**University or straight into work?**

Private neighbourhood school in Abu Dhabi. Then straight off to university in Boston.

**Who was or still is your mentor?**

An imaginary mentor: the spirit and legacy of a father and a mother who intended to change the world but left it too young to fulfil their potential, yet nevertheless impacted so many and so much.

**How physically fit are you?**

Enough to keep up with my three-and-a-half-year-old daughter. I very much strive to exercise all aspects of wellbeing - physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.

**Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?**

Ambition without talent is charlatanism - and talent without ambition is a waste.

**How politically committed are you?**

Conservation is political. To do conservation well, all stakeholders must be part of the solution.

Without agreement among them, it is impossible. So, in that context, I am very politically committed.

**What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?**

Half the Earth. I'm only half-joking. Half-Earth is a concept for nature conservation first put forward by EO Wilson, an emeritus professor at Harvard University. The idea is that half of the earth should be set aside, free from human impact, for wildlife and nature. I'm not sure it's possible but we must work toward designating a greater percentage of our total land as protected areas.

**What's your biggest extravagance?**

An uninterrupted Sunday morning with a pot of freshly brewed coffee, music and leisure reading.

**In what place are you happiest?**

Nature, nature, nature - sea, mountain, desert or my backyard.

**What ambitions do you still have?**

To bring global stakeholders together to collectively commit to protecting species from further decline.

**What drives you on?**

Injustice, be it environmental, social or economic.

**What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?**

My greatest personal achievement is building a family with my husband and raising our daughter. My greatest professional achievement still lies in the future. There is so much work to do to ensure that we protect the wonders of nature for future generations, including those of my child - and hers.

**What do you find most irritating in other people?**

Arrogance. People need to better understand that success is achieved together, not because of one person doing amazing things. Instead, it is because we are surrounded or lifted by others who contribute, participate and help ensure success. When we are arrogant, we tend to believe that we don't need to listen and, as one of my favourite authors Elif Shafak wrote, "The moment we stop listening... is also when we stop learning." There simply cannot be progress without evolving knowledge.

**If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would she think?**

She would push me to laugh more, discover more and give more.

**Which object that you've lost do you wish you still had?**

I lose things almost daily - always have. As such, I have no attachment to any particular thing. But I tend to be impatient and lament lost time.

**What is the greatest challenge of our time?**

The existential twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. From a biodiversity perspective, an estimated 10,000 species are lost to extinction each year at a rate one thousand times faster than any other period in history. Covid-19 has made the link between biodiversity loss and the health of humans, all species and the planet itself clearer than ever before. Moreover, it is my belief that as we lose nature we lose ourselves.

We have evolved as a species physically, culturally and spiritually in response to our environment.

As we chip away at nature, we are diluting our own spirit.

**Do you believe in an afterlife?**

I believe we have a duty to make the most of this life.

**If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?**

Depends when you ask me. Right now it's 11. Satisfaction is a frame of mind. **FT**

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*Interview by Hester Lacey*