

SUCCESS
WITHOUT A
SILVER SPOON

IF YOU WANT MORE
THAN MERELY TO EXIST

Samira
BOUHARROU

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For privacy reasons, some names in this book have been changed.

For Ba

*You wanted to sell the ground beneath your own feet
so that I could stand somewhere
I never accepted it
I never forgot*

This book is for you

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FOREWORD

by Ahmed Aboutaleb

In Rotterdam, it's not about where you come from, but where you want to go. It is a city that grew thanks to people rolling up their sleeves, taking responsibility and not waiting for someone else to solve their problems. These values are deeply rooted in Rotterdam, yet at the same time, they are universal. All over the world, societies are sustained by those who build, persevere and look to the future.

The story you're about to read in this book fits perfectly into that spirit. *Success Without a Silver Spoon* is more than just the story of an entrepreneur. It is a personal and honest account of trial and error, of persevering when things don't come easily, and of building something greater than yourself. It touches on questions that people everywhere can relate to: Do I truly belong? Am I allowed to dream, even if my starting point was precarious? And how do I carry on when things go against me?

Samira Bouharrou is an entrepreneur in the truest sense of the word. Born and raised in Rotterdam, but with roots elsewhere and a vision that extends beyond the city itself. She didn't rely on existing structures, didn't wait for someone to hand her opportunities on a plate, and didn't build on an inheritance or seed capital. She created all her own opportunities, with courage, discipline and a strong sense of responsibility.

From a brave little girl from the Kralingen neighbourhood of Rotterdam, she grew into a successful entrepreneur. She fulfilled her dream of setting up her own childcare centre where children want for nothing. She aptly named her centre "Het Paleisje" — The Little Palace. What began as a single childcare centre grew into an organisation with multiple branches. It is a remarkable achievement. But just as important is the manner in which this growth was achieved: with a focus on quality, staff, parents and, above all, on children. Entrepreneurship only truly has value when it contributes to society. In childcare, this has a direct impact on the future — of families, of communities and of future generations.

During my years as mayor of Rotterdam, I saw at first hand just how crucial it is for young people to be given the space to develop properly. Not only by providing care and support, but also by taking those young people and their environment genuinely seriously and actively involving them. I still hold that conviction to this day, including in my current role as chair of Jeugdzorg Nederland (Child Protective

Services). The foundations for a healthy society are laid at an early age, and it is therefore essential that children are able to develop their talents to the full.

That is precisely why Samira's work deserves special attention. She focuses on the youngest children, at a stage in life when safety, structure and attention make all the difference. Samira knows from her own experience what it is like to grow up with limited resources and without being able to take opportunities for granted. Driven by a deep sense of responsibility, she now strives to give to others what she herself had to go without. For her, childcare is not a business model, but a way of caring for the future and a tribute to her own background.

Throughout my career, I have met people from all walks of life, with diverse backgrounds. Time and again, I saw the same thing: those who take responsibility for their own lives increase their ability to contribute to the lives of others. I recognise that attitude in Samira: tenacious, committed and focused on the long term. The world needs more entrepreneurs like her. People who forge their own path while at the same time paving the way for others. People who show that one's background need not be a limitation, and that success only truly counts when you share it — in opportunities, in employment and in trust.

This book is written for anyone who wonders whether there is room for their ambition. For anyone who thinks: "It's not for me, because I don't have a network, no seed capital, no secure background." The message in Samira's book is clear: that is exactly when you matter. That is precisely when your perseverance is not a luxury, but a powerful foundation. And that is precisely when success has a deep, lasting value. You don't need to have it all to build something of value. What counts is the willingness to learn, to persevere and to invest in what really matters. For yourself and for the generations that follow you.

Let Samira's story be an inspiration for you to realise your own ambitions too.

Ahmed Aboutaleb

Former Mayor of Rotterdam (2009—2024)