

# DaringCircles

by the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society

#Women4Business

## Leading through adversity: Women's empowerment and Covid-19

*A series of interviews by the Women4Business Daring Circle*

**Interview with Norma Bastidas**  
Ultra-athlete and women's rights activist  
May 2020

 **WOMEN'S FORUM**  
FOR THE ECONOMY & SOCIETY



## **#Women4Business Interviews**

***How are women being impacted by COVID-19, and how are they leading to address the challenges faced by others? To learn, The Women's Forum for the Economy and Society is conducting a series of interviews with women entrepreneurs and ambassadors for women's empowerment around the world.***

***These interviews are unveiling unique insights into the far-reaching impacts of Covid-19, and the diverse ways these inspiring women are responding to the crisis with leadership and innovation.***

## **Beyond recovery: designing an inclusive world**

In the face of the new reality instilled by this pandemic, we are bound together more than ever. Let's dial up our solidarity as we design an inclusive recovery: for the women who continue to be disproportionately affected, and for everyone else who needs their leadership and positive impact. This crisis has reminded us of how critical our work is: of the urgent need to reshape the world together, driven by our **common purpose** to accelerate inclusive progress.

**We care. We share. We dare.**

### **Norma Bastidas, Ultra-athlete and women's rights activist**

The Women's Forum met with Norma Bastidas, ambassador for women's empowerment and the fastest female in history to run seven of the planet's most unforgiving environments on seven separate continents in seven months. Having overcome poverty, rape, abuse and addiction, Norma found another opportunity to teach her children the incredible strength of the human spirit. She seeks to show that we can all have a positive impact on other people's lives and change the world around us.

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**Norma, you have shown the world that you can have a positive impact on other people's lives while facing your own challenges. Can you tell us more about how you have overcome difficulties you have encountered in your life?**

The most difficult thing about overcoming challenges is getting past the emotional response. This is natural under challenging circumstances - especially if we feel the situation is unfair or unpredictable - but I believe you need to tap into an intellectual response as soon as you can. The best response is to move quickly from feeling "this is unfair" to thinking "what do I need to do to get out of this difficult situation?".

**“ The opportunities will only emerge if we focus on finding a way to adapt to the changing world around us ”**

**How have you been directly impacted by COVID-19, and what do you see as the biggest challenges emerging more broadly, now and in the future? How are you responding?**

I was months away from signing a TV network deal to develop content about social issues that impact women and immigrants. It has been a long, and hard road to be invited to the table and to finally have decision makers highlighting how women's issues are important. The pandemic will affect women and girls economically and socially in greater numbers because they are already vulnerable. What I am doing right now is adapting to the circumstances and creating content fast and in the format that people are consuming right now, such as social media. I have just self-published an eBook to skip the long process that usually accompanies formal publishing, to urgently continue the conversation about women's issues around the world.

**Do you see any opportunities emerging from the pandemic? Have you done anything to support or have a positive impact on others in this challenging time?**

The opportunities will only emerge if we focus on finding a way to adapt to the changing world around us. I not only lost my source of income when the motion picture industry went into a long hiatus, but a lot of my family members were impacted in a way that would be very difficult to overcome. Fortunately, I was able to help my sister and her family in Spain when she lost her job, by letting her use my place rent free so she didn't have to worry. My son who is visually impaired lost his source of income too. No jobs are available for him either now, so I moved in with him and I am paying his rent by working at an hourly wage job.

I joined the essential workers workforce and this has really enhanced my understanding of the issues affecting workers earning the minimal wage. The majority of my co-workers are women and/or immigrants.

**If you have a message to share with other women on the frontlines at this time, what is it?**

Many of the jobs designated as essential are held by women. Women are on the frontlines in greater numbers right now, but the circumstances haven't improved for women - it has only made the pay gap more obvious. The best way to thank us, the women working on the frontlines, will be to finally reward us with equal pay and opportunities to advance our careers.

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Norma's new e-book  
[A Mexican Running Wild](#)  
is out now

[@ultrarunwild](#)

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The Women4Business Daring Circle is a global coalition of partners, with an ambition to promote and accelerate women's economic empowerment in business and supply chains.

The Daring Circle is led by P&G, in collaboration with Accenture, BNP Paribas, Bouygues, Exxon Mobil, Johnson & Johnson, L'Oréal and Publicis Groupe. The Circle is supported by Knowledge Partner AT Kearney, Insight Partner Clifford Chance, and Institutional Partners WEConnect International and UN Women. Expert Partners include BY.O Group, founder of Catalyst at Large Suzanne Biegel, HEC, senior expert in gender Meg Jones, and founder of the Global Business Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment Linda Scott.