

## **Women Leadership Digital Storytelling Project**



**Text by Fatimazahraa Belkehal. Photos provided by the interviewee, Asmaa Boujibar**

This story is part of the Women Leadership Digital Storytelling led by the Stevens Initiative in collaboration with Faculty of Letters and Humanities Ben M'sik/ Hassan II University of Casablanca and Kennesaw State University, Atlanta.

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### **Asmaa Boujibar: It Started With Passion!**



Asmaa Boujibar is a research scientist and the first Moroccan and African woman to join NASA. She was born and raised in Casablanca. Asmaa obtained a Master's degree in volcanology, and a Ph.D. in planet formation. She received the Knight Decoration for National merit from His Majesty King Mohamed VI of Morocco. The postdoctoral researcher has also published several academic articles on Earth and Planetary Science.



This inspiring leader can best be described as curious, hardworking, and passionate. As a kid, she would watch documentaries on volcanoes, astronomy and archeology with her family. She was also fascinated by popular science magazines she used to read. Growing up, Asmaa Boujibar enjoyed taking classes in physics, chemistry and biology in high school and she cultivated her passion by specializing in geology and astronomy. She leads most of the projects she is involved in, and collaborates with other scientists on additional projects.



Asmaa is very considerate when it comes to work with junior female scientists. When she has young female interns, she makes sure to encourage them, giving a lot of value to their work, so they can gain confidence and also encouraging them to do more effort and to give the best to themselves. She also recommends other competent women from underrepresented groups to her colleagues who are looking for good scientists to hire, as she knows that it is more challenging for a woman, because of the few female scientists, especially from minority groups, so she has always been supportive to other women through her job.



For her to be a woman leader is exciting and challenging at the same time, and also empowering to be one of the few women in this field, and it is not only exciting by the field of her study but also about the political and the social meaning of this work. She found the big challenge was that she did not have many great female role models early in her career which led her to give the maximum and to be supportive to the rising generations.

Boujibar attributes her success to her parents for treating her and her siblings equally, and having friends who have the same passion and interest helped her to keep focus on her goal and had a positive impact on her. For the last few years, she has been expanding her skills in geology and astronomy, and she has been working on online classes and data science to be aware of what is going on in artificial intelligence. Asmaa Boujibar balances home and work responsibilities by saving time for her to rest at least once a week, which helps her to be more productive and to focus better at work. Her advice for the upcoming leaders is to stay passionate and confident, and to focus on cultivating their strengths to build a solid career.