

Salaado Qasim · Faisa Qasim · Roosa Oksanen

BIG DREAMS

Stories about Finns, who are
changing the world



20 CAREER STORIES

Big Dreams – Stories about Finns who are changing the world

20 career stories

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Design and implementation: Salaado Qasim and Faiza Qasim
Photographs: Areta Santos
Illustration: Noora Ketolainen
Layout & Cover: Books on Demand
Publisher: BoD – Books on Demand, Helsinki, Finland
Manufacturer: BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt, Germany
ISBN: 978-952-80-3405-6

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Big Dreams

“What will become of me when I grow up?” These 20 stories show that often a more important question is “What do I enjoy doing?” The answer to this question may change many times over someone’s life or remain the same from a very early age. The stories highlight how unique each person’s journey is. One thing unites all these stories: they are about people who have made their dreams come true. They have, among other things, written books, studied to become doctors, become elected MPs, set up businesses, and participated as speakers in major events. Through their activities, they have changed the world by, for example, promoting equality, increasing understanding, and directly helping other people.

What are the things that can help all people to realise their dreams and change the world? An observation that comes up in many of the stories is how great the power of an example is. People who belong to a minority often need to be pioneers and to be first in various matters. When many of the main characters in the stories were young, people who looked like them were not visible in Finland in the halls of Parliament House, on the stages of awards galas or as journalists on the TV screen. The voice of their community was often not heard in society at large. Many of them are proud to be able to act through their work as the role models or examples which they themselves lacked when they were younger. The stories show the importance of different people being seen in all areas of society. This gives rise to the feeling: “That’s possible for me, too”

The importance of community support and encouragement from others is also immense. The stories show that achievements are not

made alone. They highlight how important a community is for so many people from minority backgrounds. Communities offer peer support, encouragement, and safe spaces. They can also build up a whole new kind of activity based on the own terms of the people belonging to the minority. In these stories, many people want to support minority communities through their work. The stories also highlight how important every person's support and encouragement are. For example, encouragement from supportive student counsellors and teachers can make a huge difference to future careers – and the same applies to situations where someone is sceptical and dismissive regarding another person's dreams. Everyone has opportunities to support the dreams of others. In addition to the individual level, of course, societal structures should also support people's pursuit of their dreams. These are structures that many of the main characters of these stories impact with their work.

Above all, these stories show that everyone has their own individual journey. One person already knows as a child what they want to do as an adult. Another ponders their career choices throughout their life and often changes direction. And a third advances through surprising coincidences from one field of work to another. The variety of ways to advance in one's journey is endless, and each story is equally valuable. That's why every person deserves encouragement to pursue their dreams and make them come true – as well as inspiring role models showing that anything is possible. These stories include these kinds of people.



Wali Hashi, b. 1969

Producer, journalist, and instructor Wali Hashi's first job was as a shoeshiner in Somalia. Wali's father had abandoned his family, and, at age 9, Wali had to move from the countryside to the city to earn money for his mother and siblings. He couldn't attend school, as all his time went into supporting the family and getting food. Then, when Wali was 17, civil war broke out in Somalia. Boys were sent out to participate in the battles, which induced his uncle to send Wali to safety abroad. The destination was Sweden, but on the way, a border guard asked Wali why he couldn't stay in Finland. And so, Wali sought asylum in a country he knew nothing about.

Wali followed the news of Somalia's civil war on television. Life in Finland had taken off well, but Wali felt awful watching everything being destroyed in his homeland. At the same time, he found himself jealous of the white correspondents who were reporting on-screen on the events taking place in Somalia. Wali realised that correspondents can really make a difference in societal matters, so he decided to study to become a journalist at Turku University of Applied Sciences. His career began working for a local television channel: Wali hosted a talk show that dealt with refugee and immigrant issues. In later years, he also hosted programmes and produced documentaries for the Finnish Broadcasting Company, among others. One of the most important projects for Wali was a documentary series about refugees who studied

and worked in the Nordic countries but then moved back to their original countries to improve the situation there.

Wali, too, wants to use the knowledge he has accumulated in Finland to help Somalis. When visiting Somalia, Wali noticed how local media professionals craved training. Since 2014, he has trained hundreds of journalists in Somalia with the organisation Viestintä ja kehitys (Communication and Development) on topics such as making reports, the ethics of journalism, and security. However, the most significant achievement for Wali has been a campaign called Anteeksiannon kampanja (Campaign for Forgiveness). The campaign, conceived and planned by Wali, aims to bring peace and positivity to Somalia. It has culminated in the annual Anteeksiannon päivä (Forgiveness Day), when people come together and ask one another for forgiveness in live broadcasts. Wali would like there to be at least one day in Somalia for people to think positively, forget about the war, and forgive and be forgiven. According to Wali, the country's debating culture has now changed, and there is more talk of peace and forgiveness.

Wali's career has always been driven by a desire to promote people's understanding. In Finland, for example, he has spoken in favour of immigrants being allowed to speak for themselves in the media about issues that concern them. Wali believes that understanding can be built between people only through genuine debate – and alongside this, peace can be achieved. The most significant source of inspiration has been his mother, who taught him that positivity can make a difference. Wali thinks that if something doesn't seem right to you, it's worth doing everything you can do personally to improve the situation. That attitude has always helped him to move forward.

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**

**ILMASTO-
TEKOJA
NYT!**

**SMASH THE
PATRIARCHY**

**VAMMAISTEN
OIKEUKSIEN
PUOLESTA**

People who belong to a minority often need to be pioneers and to be first in various matters. What are the things that can help all people to realise their dreams and change the world? An observation that comes up in many of the stories is how great the power of an example is. One thing unites all these stories: they are about people who have made their dreams come true. Through their activities, they have changed the world by, for example, promoting equality, increasing understanding, and directly helping other people.

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