

Fatimah Gilliam, Esq.

Founder & CEO

www.theazaragroup.com

Career Overview: Fatimah’s career combines expertise in the law, human capital, leadership, stakeholder engagement, and negotiations – helping organizations gain influence and strategic leverage, build coalitions and consensus, drive business and organizational goals, and advance workforce optimization. She has legal expertise as a corporate attorney negotiating billion-dollar deals at a Top Five global firm, human capital and leadership acumen overseeing the diversity recruiting strategy at a Top Five global financial services firm, management and operational skills overseeing North American corporate engagement for the world’s largest humanitarian organization, and entrepreneurial and trusted advisory capabilities consulting on strategic initiatives and talent management for Fortune 500 companies on billion-dollar initiatives and business objectives.

Previously With: United Nations World Food Programme
Citigroup
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

Industry Experience: Financial Services Healthcare
Legal Fashion
Real Estate Non-Profit
Sports & Entertainment Humanitarian

Upcoming Book: *Race Rules – What Your Black Friend Won’t Tell You*
Berrett-Koehler, January 30, 2024



Fatimah Gilliam, Esq. is the Founder and CEO of The Azara Group, which is a consulting firm providing strategic advisory services to Fortune 500 companies and thriving privately-held businesses. She started her career on Wall Street as a corporate attorney at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, serving as legal counsel to multinational Fortune 100 companies on billion-dollar and multimillion-dollar international securitizations, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and loans, and real estate transactions worth hundreds of millions of dollars. For Citigroup, she oversaw its diversity recruiting for all of its U.S. businesses, improving Citi’s diversity hiring numbers through the 2007 to 2009 credit crisis, strengthening internal and external key relationships, managing a budget and staff, and serving on corporate advisory boards.

Fatimah was also the Head of Finance and Fundraising for North America for the Nobel Peace Prize-winning United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), which is the world’s largest humanitarian relief organization fighting hunger and the lead logistics organization for the global humanitarian community responding to crises, feeding over 100 million people annually in nearly 90 countries globally. She oversaw North American corporate partnerships and established WFP’s U.S.-based corporate engagement operations where she negotiated multinational and multiorganizational deals with *The Hunger Games* film franchise and rapper 50 Cent that provided roughly 20 million meals to food-insecure children in Africa and the Middle East. At WFP, she developed the division’s strategic plan, managed strategic relationships across WFP worldwide and with external non-profit partners, and oversaw a team developing global partnerships with MasterCard, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and the Campbell Soup Company.

Today, Fatimah is a successful entrepreneur. Since launching her company in 2013, she has advised Fortune 500 and corporate clients in tackling leadership and management challenges, developing sustainable solutions that create more inclusive environments and business relationships, promoting equitable access to professional opportunities, tactically expanding leverage and bargaining power, and strategically positioning businesses for growth and continued success. This includes helping organizations assess and mitigate risk, enabling leaders and companies to thrive by better connecting with clients, employees, and key stakeholders, and mediating troubled partnerships and teams to promote relationship repair.

Examples of Fatimah’s projects include advising a Top 5 global financial services firm redefine inclusive philanthropic and community engagement to activate on a five-year plan to spend \$1 billion in underserved communities across the United States. This consulting project engaged employees across all U.S.-based geographies, equipping people to disrupt traditional philanthropy models for increased diversity in strategic and community giving, and developing the buy-in to evaluate internal operations for improved inclusion and belonging across the U.S.-team that promoted stronger team cohesion.

She has also advised a Fortune 100 healthcare company reorganize and upgrade team leadership to better align business goals, reinvasion its leadership development, expand leverage in business negotiations to land lucrative long-term business partners, and manage through strained strategic relationships to gain influence, power, and control. This consulting project helped the multibillion-dollar business unit’s revenues increase. Its profitability exceeded corporate goals and outperformed the growth of all the other business lines of the corporation. This client is one of the largest insurance companies in America.

In addition to advising clients on how to improve diversity initiatives to better attract, retain, and promote diverse talent to create inclusive workplaces, Fatimah has advised in complex business negotiations. She has helped her clients negotiate profitable transactions and business relationships – helping business leaders and institutions “get what they want” to drive organizational and business objectives. Also, she has served as a trusted advisor to senior executives in being more effective managers. She empowers her clients to be strong business and industry leaders, drive results, and strategically influence.

As an expert negotiator, strategist, and diversity consultant, and astute advisor on stakeholder engagement, management, coalition-building, and workforce optimization, Fatimah has been interviewed on television and for news articles and written articles on negotiating, leadership and professional development, diversity, workplace issues, labor disputes, the sports industry, the technology industry, being an influencer, career strategy, and the “art of persuasion.” Fatimah is a frequent speaker and has spoken at conferences to standing-room-only crowds – giving keynote addresses and leading workshops for professionals and top executives on how to master the art of negotiation and position themselves for career success in an increasingly diverse business landscape.

Fatimah graduated from Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government with a Master in Public Policy (concentrating in International Trade and Finance; Conflict Resolution and Negotiation), Columbia Law School (participating in the Mediation Clinic; earning the Parker School Certificate of Achievement in International and Comparative Law), and Wellesley College (*cum laude* in Economics and French). She is a board member of the Columbia Law School Association, and a board member and the Careers Committee Co-Chair of the New York Wellesley Alumnae Club. She has lived in Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe, been to over 40 countries, and speaks French. Fatimah has also completed three marathons and three Olympic-distance triathlons to support cancer research, volunteers as an attorney for Election Protection, and successfully lobbied for changes to the U.S. tax code.

Core Competencies:

- **Stakeholder Engagement & Management** – Understands complex international and multi-organizational partnerships and the importance of addressing business and stakeholder concerns, along with leading and managing through change.
- **Coalition & Consensus Building** – Helps organizations and leaders gain influence and strategic leverage to create momentum for buy-in and critical support for objectives, including relationship and team repair after organizational and management dysfunction.
- **Negotiations** – Strategically recognizes the interests of stakeholders and astute at aligning parties and mutual goals.
- **Common Sense Approach** – Leverages practical methodologies to strategically drive organizational success, and understands the importance of adjusting and benchmarking goals to what’s realistic and aligning risk exposure to the context to devise feasible pathways to goal achievement.
- **ESG Proficient (Environment, Social & Governance)** – Understands issues of human capital, diversity and inclusion, the importance of corporate values and culture, talent management, employee relations, relationships with external stakeholders and customers and how these impact businesses, and pay equity. Incorporates into analysis balancing shareholder value and profitability with cultivating talent for best-in-class hiring to retain employees and minimize the financial and productivity impact of talent drains, losing staff, employee turnover, and driving away customers and clients.