
THOUGHT-STARTER: CAN EMIRATI YOUTH CHALLENGE CONSERVATISM?

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Growing up in a globalised yet highly conservative society, young people in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are beginning to test the boundaries of self-expression, identity and emotion, says Sarah Ben Romdane.

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With the parallels of global mindsets versus traditional practices and religious beliefs, Emirati youth are navigating the stigma attached to sensitive topics like mental health and gender, using online platforms to carve out safe spaces.

The UAE's rapid social, economic and cultural mutations from the past few decades have left many feeling lost and conflicted, struggling to find their way in a country that was a desert just 50 years ago. Emiratis like Sarah Alagroobi, a 29-year-old artist, are finding alternative ways to confront the nuances of modern living in the UAE. She started **The Letters Project**, an online platform that invites people living in the region to share emotions and opinions anonymously.

Young Emirati women are also challenging the rules of modest clothing, pushing the boundaries with their bold and non-conformist sense of style. Instagram star **Leena Alghouti** is leading this mindset shift by refusing to be tied to a single identity.

Look out for the full Emerging Youth: United Arab Emirates report [here](#).