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Katten Welcomes Shiza Shahid in Honor of Women's History Month

(LOS ANGELES) Katten announced today that the firm celebrated Women's History Month with social activist and entrepreneur Shiza Shahid as a featured guest in its Perspectives Speaker Series.

"Women's History Month is not only about reflecting on the achievements and contributions of women throughout history, but it is also about sharing the stories of women who are shaping our future," said Partner Christine Fitzgerald, a member of the firm's Executive Committee, Board of Directors and Women's Leadership Forum steering committee. "Shiza is a changemaker and a truly inspiring and remarkable leader."

In line with this year's Women's History Month theme, "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations," Fitzgerald moderated the discussion with Shahid at Katten's Los Angeles office. The discussion covered Shahid's work as the founding CEO of the Malala Fund, an international nonprofit organization that advocates for girls' education named in honor of Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

"I believe most of us care deeply and are deeply empathetic and compassionate, but we don't think it's our place to make a difference. We think someone smarter or richer than us is already out there fixing it," Shahid said. "Don't hold yourself back. Don't make yourself small. Believe you can make a difference because you can. And the world needs you to."

Shahid recalled how she stayed connected to what was happening back home in Pakistan when she was studying at Stanford University. She came across a blog entry from a young girl in a town where female education was banned. She tracked down the girl's father, offered her help and, on summer break, returned home to organize a summer camp for young schoolgirls who wanted to share their stories to bring change to their community. A few years later, that girl, Yousafzai, survived being shot by the Taliban targeted for her advocacy and activism, prompting worldwide outrage and an outpouring of support. That became the genesis for the Malala Fund, an effort to help other girls around the globe who were denied the right to education.

Shahid said she believes in the butterfly effect, and that story reminds her that the biggest changes often start with the smallest acts.

“We often get paralyzed when we look at issues from a distance. We think we have to have all the answers. ‘How do I solve climate change? How do I end world hunger?’ That is not our job. Our job is to show up, help one person and believe in the power of that. When you show up, the path unfolds. The more proximate you are to an issue, the clearer it becomes to you what needs to happen next,” Shahid said.

Shahid also talked about growing up in Pakistan, finding a sense of purpose through volunteerism, and starting her own mission-driven cookware brand, Our Place. She is also the author of the cookbook *Dinner at Our Place*, which she described as a love letter to how food and traditions can help build community.

Katten’s Perspectives Speaker Series is a program designed to increase cultural awareness, broaden perspectives and inspire dialogue across the firm community.

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