

Muzvare Betty Makoni Show - Girls and Women Empowerment

The show for 21st Century girls and women

Muzvare Betty Makoni Show is the brainchild of Simba Nyanhanga who runs the Zimonline Radio. Simba lost his sister to child abuse and for a long time had followed my work and admired what I did with girls and really wanted his www.zimonlineradio.com to highlight my girl child empowerment model.

He approached me and asked if I could host a show as a means to encourage women to speak out about abuse. I was really touched by Simba's story and his enthusiastic insistence that I should be the exclusive hostess for the show; one which could reach out and help to empower women and girls.

As I was already working to a very tight schedule, I wondered how something new could be added. However, even as I carried out my day to day work, my thoughts kept going back to Simba's request and a plan started to take form at the back of my mind. I would have to make time for this show. I could take advantage of my many fans on Facebook and there were also over 10 000 supporters globally who followed my work on a daily basis. This would give me a platform where I could turn my Girls Empowerment Village in Zimbabwe into a Global Girls Empowerment Village. It would inspire and energise those who already supported our work and help them and others to see the more positive things women activists like me try to do against all odds. I accepted Simba's invitation and was given a slot on Sundays from 10pm to 12 midnight, UK Time. The Muzvare Betty Makoni Show was launched!

It is well known that I suffered a lot of defamation through the media. It was in trepidation that I put myself out there, but it had to be done. I could have been the target of hatred once again for doing what I so strongly believe in. Although my work on the empowerment of girls is important, I knew this show must be for girls to speak about themselves. I would encourage them to talk to me and not about me. At the same time I would make it known that I always mean well, I am not afraid to speak about my work and I am passionate about what I do. My objective is to build the foundation for girls so that they may develop into women leaders and walk in the fullness of their potential. Through this show I want women and girls, who have suffered in life like me, to know - although their hopes and dreams have been broken, they can always bend down and pick up the pieces together. I want to send a message to all women and girls that unless we speak out; the world will not know that what we do is good and we do it with good will and good intent.

Many girls and women have heard about me but they never hear direct from me and so I really want to demystify myself and show that I am Betty Makoni, the little girl vendor, the child labourer who worked all her life for education, a rape survivor who grew up to care for other rape victims, a teacher who changed a classroom into a grassroots girls organisation, a global champion of girls rights who from time to time wants to be with everyone and wants to maintain simple friendships and connections. I just want everyone coming onto my radio show to know that I am all theirs and we should always develop a culture of talking and not rumor-mongering. It is a blessing to be able to speak directly to someone and get to know them better and to be inspired.

I did some critical thinking about the Muzvare Betty Makoni Show because whenever someone tries to buck the system and introduce something new, their efforts are often thwarted. Therefore, as well as women and girls, I hoped the show would attract supportive men – husbands, brothers, boyfriends. By participating in the discussions they would soon realise how vital women are to the development of all countries and can be very valuable contributors. I really want people to know the world isn't flat and that artificial boundaries are a total hindrance to everyone when dealing with universal issues like gender inequality, education, disease and poverty.

Talking to someone helps you to get to know them better. You begin to understand why they do certain things in a particular way. I have spoken on many world forums, but my speeches could never get the whole picture across and I always felt they weren't inspiring people as much as I'd hoped to do. Zimonline Radio offered me the opportunity to do what I do best – talking! I could speak and let my voice be heard by a greater audience. My thoughts would come out freely. It reminds me of the Girl Empowerment Village that I set up in Zimbabwe where we would sit around a fire, take our dried maize cobs and pop the kernels out one by one. It is all about building a global network of women and girls who have so much to offer but with so little opportunity to be noticed. Here on Zimonline Radio they are free to speak and share.

My show brings into the limelight women, girls as well as men who are doing amazing work. They get no other public recognition – no press coverage or TV interviews, yet they are the ones willing to work in the communities, in schools and within family units, wherever we need the real action. They are people who walk the talk. In my experience, it seems that most people who go on big shows and receive public recognition are already well-known and established celebrities. These women and girls who work tirelessly in their communities are overlooked and remain anonymous. My show is very innovative in showing the world that these women and girls are the true foot soldiers, who are doing the real work and changing the lives of many girls.

I started my show with Rutendo Denise who is a young woman studying in South Africa. She has what she calls the R effect. She wants the world to be infected by the R effect and inspire everyone to do good wherever they are. This does not require any donor money - it is you, the individual, giving of yourself for something good.

I then took a walk down memory lane, back to my 1998 Advanced Level class. This is where 10 high school girl students and I started the first girls' club which has now grown into a global organisation, championing for the rights of girls. I call these old girls BIG WOMEN as Florence Mudzongo is now a lawyer and based in Canada. Florence Jemwa is here with me in the UK pursuing a Masters Degree in social work. Esther Saidi is doing a double major at a university in the USA.

Each girl shares a story of poverty as child in Chitungwiza, but also reveals that poverty is a vicious cycle and the Girl Child Empowerment Model breaks such a vicious cycle and ushers one into a new era of gender equality and equity. No-one in the world has ever highlighted the work done by Girl Child Network Zimbabwe and to seek out such powerful women who are now global leaders. It takes exactly ten years to empower a girl to be a BIG WOMAN who is economically independent.

Such stories we share on my show seem quite ordinary but for a woman or girl, who has almost given up on life, it can completely transform them. They will accept these examples as a powerful inspiration.

We have also had one of the greatest supporters of Girl Child Network Worldwide on my show – New York’s finest poet, Tantra Zawadi. Oh she is Girl Power! The rhythm and sound of the poem “Girl” made everyone cry and take action. Caller after caller felt we do not get to hear enough from these powerful women poets, and yet they are so inspirational. Tantra recently produced her book “Gathered at Her Sky” and I have told all women and girls this should be to them as the Bible is to Christian women!

The day all girls in the world came together is when, after seeing me on CNN getting the CNN 2009 Heroes Award, eight girls in four countries followed in my footsteps. They have formed chapters of Girl Child Network Worldwide.

14 year old Olivia Lange is amazing and she has so far worked to raise funds in solidarity with girls in Zimbabwe. Olivia is fighting against rape of girls because of the myth that virgins cure HIV and AIDS.

Many champions of girls` rights have been inspired to start their own girls clubs. They came to speak on my show from various US universities and colleges. This included: Jessica Lu from Villanova in Philadelphia; Katie Schwart at University of Berkeley in California; Roselyn Wells in Nova Scotia, Canada; Tanya Swain from Pearson Education Center in Canada

If the girls keep up the spreading of girl empowerment at this rate it will not be long before the whole of USA will have girls clubs! All we need are a million girls to form the first ever fund for girls. This is truly girl to girl support

During my show I always track how girls are doing after our empowerment programs and Esther Saidi a GCN Zimbabwe leader has joined hands with her US colleagues. I told her during the show that even if USA is considered a rich country, you can also contribute and help girls there just as much as USA helps us in Zimbabwe with donations. We don't think about reversal development and always think the poor must always receive from the rich. My show recently had Stephanie Griffin from Florida who is working so hard to support private companies set up programs to help African women and girls with mobile phones and basic I.T. infrastructure. There is so much women and girls can do to add to the development of the economy

Just hold on and don't go anywhere as many exciting guests and inspiring programs are coming. “Men as role models” is on the cards! My show will always invite men to share whatever good they are doing for families and communities. My next show will lay down the bare facts about male rape and for the first time the Zimbabwe protest musician Vio Mak launches a child sexual abuse album and calls a stop to the rape of children. It is a fully packed show with ordinary girls, women, men as well as boys who do extraordinary things!

As I always say, it is the ordinary woman who tries to get into extraordinary talks and discussions, like me; someone who changes our families, communities and schools - one person at a time. Who knows, one day I may be like Oprah Winfrey who shares a story of childhood abuse and, using such negative experience to set up programs to help girls so that the same will never happen again .It is we who experience these things who will come out and break the silence and influence everyone to do the same. If one day my show is known in every corner of the world, I will stand proud and say “I am the first Zimbabwean woman to form a Global village from a small African village”.

Welcome to Muzvare Betty Makoni show every Sunday 10pm UK time on Zimonline Radio

www.muzvarebettymakoni.org

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