

**A Journey in Social Work: Survivor, Activist, Social Worker –
In conversation with Dr Muzvare Betty Hazviperi Makoni.**



We were thrilled to host an inspirational conversation with our very special and internationally acclaimed alumna Dr Muzvare Betty Makoni. Five years on from completing her MSc in Social Work at Royal Holloway, Dr Makoni shared her experiences as a survivor, activist and social worker in conversation with Prof Anna Gupta and Dr Louise O'Connor. This was the first in a series of inspiring conversations and updates with Royal Holloway social work alumni.

Attended by a host of current students, alumni and guests Muzvare spoke movingly about her early experiences and her lifetime commitment to challenging gender inequalities, gendered violence and FGM (female genital mutilation). Participants watched a clip from a documentary on her work to found the Girl Child Network in Zimbabwe in 1998 (<http://girlchildnetworkzw.org/>) Muzvare's work has supported thousands of women and girls internationally and continues to this day. Recognised as an Ashoka Fellow since 2007, in 2011 Newsweek named Muzvare as one of the 150 women who shake the world. She has received multiple awards including the 2007 World Children's Prize, which she received alongside Nelson Mandela. Muzvare's work has been the feature of an award-winning documentary *Tapestries of Hope* and she is the author of an inspiring autobiography and poetry book. A short clip from her documentary can be accessed here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqvDoM6MeJU>) and the full documentary is available here via the filmmaker (<https://watch.cgood.tv/programs/tapestries-for-hope>)

Muzvare shared how, since qualifying as a social worker in 2016, she has continued to combine social work with activism and advocacy. Amongst her many activities she has expanded her Girls' Empowerment work (www.girlsempowermentinitiative.co.uk), she is a specialist adviser in court cases related to gendered violence and forced marriage, serves on Crown Prosecution scrutiny panels and is a member of the School of Law and Social Sciences Advisory Board at Royal Holloway. Emphasising the critical thinking and observational skills she developed during her MSc in social work Muzvare spoke of how she has used these to extend her critical skills in advocacy and support work in practice and in her work with black and minority ethnic social work students. Recognising and challenging power were themes Muzvare returned to throughout the discussion,

emphasising the importance of exploring and understanding the multiple and intersectional ways power operates in social work and in practice education.

Feedback from participants highlighted how incredibly inspirational Muzvare is, here are just a few examples from experienced practitioners, academics and students who attended:

'Breath taking account, what an inspiration!'

'One of the most inspirational presentations I have ever seen'.

'What an empowering and inspiring presentation I got goose bumps just listening to you share your journey. Thank you for all your hard work you're indeed an agent of change , happy international social workers day and many congratulations on all your achievements well done Muzvare'.

We look forward to hearing more from Muzvare and to benefit from her input as a member of the School of Law and Social Sciences Advisory Board at Royal Holloway.