

WFWP UK: Winners speech for the Young Women Speech Contest 2024

Mitty Tohma
October 19, 2024



The Young Women Speech Contest 2024, held at Lancaster Gate, London, featured the talents of seven remarkable contestants. Today, we highlight the inspiring speech by Ms. Sara Bokrugji, who captivated the audience with her insights on "Women Leading with Creativity," emphasizing the importance of innovative leadership and governance.



Winners Speech 2024

Name: Ms. Sara Bokrugji

Women Leading the Fight Against Domestic Violence: A Campaign for Creative and Compassionate Leadership Drawing from Personal Experience to Advocate for Change When will it stop?

Is this my fault?

Please make this stop.

999 what is your emergency? My husband has hit me and I am reporting after 23 years.

To 'I am so proud of you mum'.

As I stand before you today, I am reminded of the countless nights I spent as a child, hiding in my room, fearful of the violence that plagued our home. For 23 years, I watched my mother endure the unimaginable - abuse and terror that no one should ever face.

Domestic violence wasn't just a distant issue for me; it was the harsh reality of my everyday life. Before going to school, I had a script my dad would tell me every morning 'Shhh do not go to your school and tell the teachers what is happening at home'. To coming home and hearing shouting and screaming of pain and begging for forgiveness. But for the forgiveness of what? Maybe it was my fault. Maybe if I was not around, my dad would not do this to my mum. Growing up, I saw the world through a lens of fear, my childhood overshadowed by the brutal cycle of violence that gripped our home and trapped us.



To hearing from family members 'Sara it is normal, this is what women have to endure - for a man to protect his household and family' because the only way a woman will 'learn' is through violence. But we are all thinking, 'learn' what exactly. Learn that her place as a woman is to remain silent and abide to every word a man says - whether it is wrong or right.

But after enduring all that pain for 23 years my mum said STOP! Stop to the violence, ending the generational cycle of trauma and abuse and escaping to a new reality. One that is difficult to transition to. Centuries of normalised abuse can lead to thoughts like 'Did I make the right decision', 'what will his family do now', 'what will he do when he is released'...

Nobody really talks of the struggles as soon as that 999 call goes off. What do I do? Where do I go? Who do I contact? Will the police even help?

Omg he will revenge now...his family will too...

Maybe i should just go back...?

But today, as I share my story with you, I also share a vision of hope - hope that is being ignited by women around the world who are leading with creativity, compassion, and unwavering determination to end domestic violence. These women are using innovative strategies to address an issue that has been normalised for far too long. They are transforming ordinary spaces into safe havens, leveraging technology to break down barriers, and most importantly, they are educating the next generation to ensure that the cycle of violence ends with us.

Education is more than just a tool - it's a lifeline. It empowers individuals to recognise the signs of abuse, to understand that they deserve better, and to know that they are not alone.

For me, it was the knowledge that came later in life, the realisation that my mother's suffering was not her fault, that gave me the strength to speak out today.

In Rwanda, programs led by women like First Lady Jeannette Kagame are engaging all genders in conversations about respect, equality, and non-violence - conversations that I wish had been part of my own upbringing. These programs are not just teaching facts; they are shifting mindsets, challenging the harmful norms that allow violence to persist, and planting the seeds of change.

But education alone is not enough. We need policies that protect survivors and systems that hold abusers

accountable. Leaders like Jacinda Ardern are showing us the way, implementing policies that recognise the complexities of domestic violence and offer real, practical support. These leaders are changing not just laws, but lives - offering a beacon of hope to those who, like my mother, have felt trapped in a cycle of violence.

And as technology advances, it is becoming an even more powerful ally in this fight. Apps like MySafetipin are empowering women to make informed decisions about their safety, providing access to resources that can be the difference between life and death. These innovations are breaking down the isolation that often accompanies domestic violence, ensuring that support is available whenever and wherever it is needed.

Today, I stand with these women leaders, inspired by their creativity and courage. They are not just responding to a crisis; they are reimagining a world where domestic violence is no longer a dark secret but a shared responsibility - a world where no child has to grow up in fear, where no one has to suffer in silence.

I felt hopeless, with being the eldest of 5 siblings - but let us give hope and allow my inner child to scream of happiness and in victory.

He's just looking at my phone for curiosity. He likes me without makeup, I am so naturally beautiful. I don't feel good about it but its ok, he hasn't hit me.

He followed me to work? Thats weird. Probably wants to make sure i am okay. I dont feel good about it but its ok he hasnt hit me.

He just pushed me but he feels bad and it didnt hurt. I dont feel good about it but its ok it didnt hurt.

He slapped me, but he said he wont do it again. I dont feel good about it but its ok it didnt hurt.

He punched me, but it was just once. I dont feel good about it but its ok, was just one time.

He beat me up; I can't leave; he will kill me, my family, my kids if i call 999.

Im stuck. Help.

Let us commit to amplifying their voices, to supporting their efforts, and to ensuring that every person can live free from fear and violence. Together, we can create a future where stories like my mother are a thing of the past - where creative and compassionate leadership has eradicated domestic violence for good.

Thank you.

