



# Feminist *Figures*

presents:

## BLESSING OKOJIE EZE

*social worker - founder of Women of Inestimable Values Foundation*

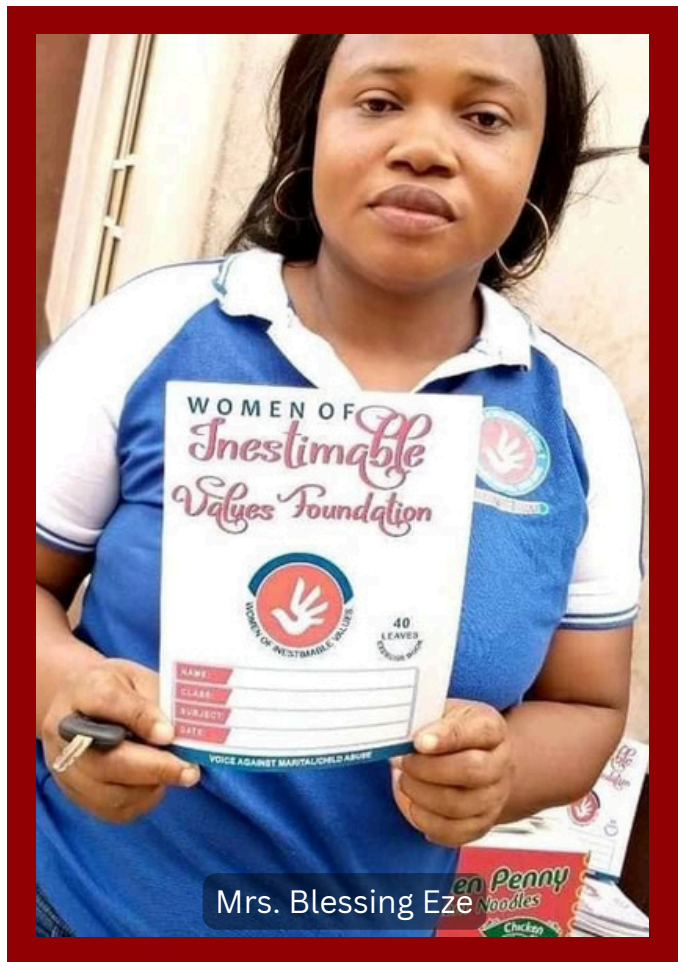
*advocate against all forms of violence against women and children*

**Blessing Okojie Eze** is the founder of the **Women Of Inestimable Values Foundation**, and a social worker who fights against domestic and sexual abuse of women and children. Her commitment to **ending violence against women** and **children** comes from witnessing first-hand the **gender-based violence (GBV)** in **Nigeria**.

She has a **Bachelor's Degree in Sociology** from the University of Ibadan and a **Master's degree in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution**. She is part of the Organisation of Economists and Business Analysts, and the Institute of Managerial Economists of Nigeria.

Among others, she made impactful achievements through the **Young**

**Africa Leaders Initiative**, the **Fredrick Foundation** and **Better Life for African Child Foundation**. She has won numerous accolades for her impactful work, including **Youth for Positive Change** and **Personality of the Year Against Gender Based Violence** by Igbo TV. She was also nominated for the **SDG 5 and SDG 4 Advocate of the Year**, the **Young Social Founder of 2021 Award** and the **2021 Humanitarian Awards Global 2021**.



# Women of Inestimable Values Foundation

In an exclusive interview with **Politics4Her**, Blessing shared on the origins of her foundation - **Women of Inestimable Values** (WIV) - which has been working as a registered NGO since **2017**. When she was just a girl, Blessing witnessed a woman being **physically abused** by her husband and his family for not giving birth to a **male child**. What she described as a **“very severe case”** made her wonder about what could and should be done to help women in similar situations.

Her first unofficial group was called **God’s Girls International**: “I invited some of my friends to start teaching the public about **women’s rights**, just discussing what can be done to help women, **not just in Nigeria, but in Africa”** said Blessing.

In another case witnessed years later, a woman was pushed out of a moving vehicle by her husband. This led to the **Women of Inestimable Values Foundation**: “That was when I just realized that it is time to stand, it is time to **say “NO” to all forms of violence against women**. [...] The second experience made me say ‘No, I am starting that vision regardless of who is going to support me.’”

Blessing’s **passion, resilience** and **determination**, formed an impactful organization, the goal of which is to **reduce domestic violence** and **all forms of abuse against women and children**. Their objective to **empower** and **protect** women and children is carried out through various **community projects**, like organizing visits to provide food, clothes, and other necessities to those in need.



Blessing and the WIV team at one of their outreach projects. Source: LinkedIn

## CULTURE, VIOLENCE & INTERNALIZED MISOGYNY

As emphasized by **Blessing**, one of the main issues in the perpetration of gender-based violence in **Nigeria** as well as many other African countries is **culture**. Cultural justifications are used as a dangerous **discriminatory basis** for various violent acts.



**How do you fight it when you go on site after a woman was beaten up and you see these elderly people talking about the culture before talking about the well-being of women?**

“We are in a patriarchal society, we cannot beat that, but now it's even **within the women themselves**. In Nigeria, they are **cultural beings**. They believe so much in their culture, we've encountered cases where not just the **men** are our problem, but the women. We have encountered cases where we are going to help women to rescue them from an abusive relationship and they will end up telling you that it's **against their culture**, their **religion** is in support of this and then we have even seen women making **excuses for abusive men**, it's terrible.”

### Why women protect their abusers

Women protecting their abusers is a complicated aspect of **domestic abuse** advocacy. Whether it be the mothers, female family, community members and even the partners of abusive men themselves, an **obstacle to prosecution** and **survivor support** can be the **closing of ranks around perpetrators**. Fear of retaliation for speaking out from not only the man himself but also the entire community is a major factor. Women can be **shunned** or **exiled** for leaving abusive relationships, even being told by other women that receiving **violence** is simply **part of being a woman**.

**Internalized misogyny** occurs due to the way patriarchy is embedded into the **ideas of culture** and **gender expectations**, telling women that men have the right to treat them as lesser. An estimated **26%** of women worldwide have experienced **intimate-partner violence** ([source](#)).



Having a **relationship with your abuser** has been proven to make it substantially more difficult to leave or go to the authorities, especially when there are **children** involved. It often becomes an **accepted part** of the relationship even as it escalates. Even **women** who have experienced this abuse themselves will **protect** sons, brothers or community members who are **perpetrators** because it is **normalized**. All of this leads to the **perpetuation of the cycle of abuse** which **Blessing** and her organization are working to dismantle.

In our interview, **Blessing** emphasized the **impact of cultures** that go **against women's well-being**:

Culture is a way of life. You know, I've come to understand that **cultures were created by men**. Now, if there is a culture that was created by a man that is against my well-being as a woman,

**I CAN RECREATE THAT CULTURE.**

True to their word, the **Women of Inestimable Values Foundation** are changing culture every day. In addition to their outreach program and free workshops, they're also holding **lectures** in **secondary schools**.



The WIV team and pupils at a walk against sexual abuse on Children's Day.

Source: [WomenofInestimableValues.org](http://WomenofInestimableValues.org)

Besides teaching **practical skills** like website creation and digital marketing, they also **educate on domestic abuse** in order to **transform communities** into being able to speak up, advocate for one another, **help victims** and ultimately **prevent abuse**.

In line with the **cultural considerations** mentioned above, they make sure to include family members into these debates, especially the **elders**.

They also organize free monthly **empowerment programs** which educate women and equip them with various skills like baking, sewing and skills to help them reach **financial independence**.



WIV visiting a secondary school. Source: [WomenofInestimableValues.org](https://www.womenofinestimablevalues.org)



The WIV team during one of their free workshops for women. Source: [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com)

**"When the mind is educated, we have little work to do."**

To help further this cause, Blessing wrote a **book** - [Curbing Domestic Violence in Africa](#) - on how to recognize and deal with **gender-based violence** and **sexual abuse**. After receiving various messages from young girls and women suffering **abuse**, where many of the perpetrators were **men in power**, like teachers preying on their students, **Blessing** and **WIV** started giving **lectures** and **distributing the book** in schools.

## BLESSING'S ADVICE TO YOUNG ACTIVISTS

### ***ON PASSION, COLLABORATION AND LEARNING***

#### **1 Find your passion.**

“If you're not passionate about it, when you are not receiving support, you're going to stop. When you're passionate about it, it is what you want to do, even when nobody supports you. Sometimes even my team wonders where I get all this energy from. It's passion! You should not give up or relent.”

#### **2 Collaborate.**

“You should learn to collaborate. You should look for a mentor. There are people I respect so much in advocacy, I have mentors that remind me I'm human when I'm feeling down. I can just call them and then receive some words of encouragement, some guidance.”

#### **3 Never stop learning.**

“You should read. A leader should be a reader. Read about something. When you're not reading, you're dying, your mind is dying. The moment your mind is dead, you're dead. You cannot be a leader if you don't have knowledge. You cannot be a leader and you cannot contribute to meaningful discussions. We learn, to win.”

To learn more about **Blessing Okojie Eze** and the work of the **Women of Inestimable Values Foundation**, visit the links below:



[WomenofInestimableValues.org](https://www.womenofinestimablevalues.org)



[WomenofInestimable](https://www.instagram.com/womenofinestimable)



[Curbing Domestic Violence in Africa](#) by  
Blessing Okojie Eze & Sandra Benjamin



We would like to sincerely thank Blessing Okojie Eze for taking the time to talk to us and for providing us with an impactful and sincere interview.

At **Politics4Her**, we commend **Blessing** and the **Women of Inestimable Values Foundation (WIV)** in their efforts to **free and protect** women and children from **violence** and **oppressive cultural norms**. As feminist activists, we believe in and strive for activism that **equips women** with the skills they need to **partake in their own liberation** and become **authors of their own empowerment**.

We advocate for intersectional feminism to look **beyond Western** and **white perspectives**, considering the roles that **different cultures** and **traditions** play in constructing various patriarchal narratives. We recognize that an **effective** and **empathetic** feminist struggle takes into account these **diversities** in order to liberate.

We celebrate the incredible contributions of **Blessing** and **WIV** towards not only advancing the status of women in **Nigeria**, but in **Africa** and the **world** at large. We wish them strength and resilience as they continue their fight against **GBV** and **patriarchal norms**.

### Who inspires you?

If you would like to nominate a young feminist changemaker to be highlighted in our monthly volume, **fill out this form**.

*Research:* Valentine Lestringuez, Marina Vitković, Ana Luísa Rebouças, Natalie Alper

*Editing & design:* Marina Vitković

*Outreach:* Valentine Lestringuez

