

## FNF Human Rights Podcast special Human Rights Day episode – Kenya-Transcript

**Host:** Nangamso Kwinana

**Guests:** Rachael Mwikali, Juliet Wanjira

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[00:00:00] **Audio Clip:** As Kenya prepares for next month's polls women living in the countries, informal settlements have come together to demand a guaranteed security and respect for women's rights. But too often family see their girls education as a luxury they cannot afford. And even those girls lucky enough to go to school, still face many problems.

[00:00:23] The Kenyan constitution upholds gender equality, but in practice, it's still the. Strict COVID-19 lock down south heat, especially hard people in NATO. These informal settlements without a social security system to help them when they can't work. People face starvation and eviction.

[00:00:42] **Nangamso Kwinana**

I warmly welcome you to our Kenya podcast episode! My name is Nangamso Kwinana and I am happy that you have tuned in again. So far, in our journey through sub-Saharan Africa, we have met some exciting people. If you missed our previous episodes, do take a listen. You will find these episodes wherever you listen to your podcasts. Before I introduce today's guests, I would like to tell you a few things about Kenya. Located in East Africa, Kenya borders the Indian Ocean. The country lies on the Equator. Kenya borders five countries:

Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Somalia. The country is slightly smaller than the state of Texas in the USA and slightly bigger than France in Europe. Kenya's name comes from Mount Kenya but the word originates probably from the Kikuyu and Kamba languages meaning 'God's resting place'.

Unfortunately, arbitrary arrests, police violence, forced disappearances and intimidation attempts against the civilian population are part of the sad everyday life in Kenya.

In today's episode, we have once more two guests visiting us. Please welcome Rachael Mwikali Muenil! Rachael is a woman human rights defender, Pan

African Feminist, community organizer, a Gender Justice and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) activist. She was born and raised in Mathare Informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.

Rachael works towards changing patriarchal systems, structures and other societal systems that suppress women and girls. She encourages and supports women and girls in informal settlements to take up leadership in society, to fight taboos regarding menstruation as well as encouraging women and girls to advocate for their rights. Furthermore, she is a board member of Amnesty International Kenya and the Young Women Leadership Institute.

We also have the pleasure of engaging with Juliet. Juliet Wanjira Wanjiru is the co-founder of the Mathare Social Justice Centre. She is a grassroots human rights defender and social justice activist. She is also the founder of the Matigari book club, which teaches true African history to the children and teenagers at the Mathare social justice centre.

Juliet has been at the forefront of the fight against judicial killings and police brutality. She is known for the empowering words: When we lose our fear, they lose their power. Words she said during a confrontation with police during a protest. She is a 4th-year student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a degree in international relations and diplomacy.

Juliet and Rachel, you are both women and human rights activists in Kenya. They say that life can be dangerous for women in Kenya.

[00:03:48] I'm sure the issues that you are addressing are inconvenient for many Juliette. If you could please come in first and thereafter, Rachel, do you feel safe as a woman, [00:04:00] an activist in Kenya?

[00:04:02] **Juliet Wanjira** : No, I do not. There are very many risks involved when you're an activist and a woman in our country, especially the areas we work around, uh, extrajudicial executions, many women losing their sons to police.

[00:04:20] We are constantly on the lookout for our personal safety safety, but I am happy that there are organizations that are looking out for the safety of women, human right defenders and human rights defenders in general.

[00:04:35] **Rachael Mwikali:** Uh, definitely. I don't feel safe because of my work as a woman, human rights defender, and also as a feminist. And the reason why I say this is because most of the work that I do is around those like, um, co speaking truth to power. Around the [00:05:00] organizing or radical issue that most people don't want to talk about. That's um, challenging patriarchy in whichever space in whichever form. Um, when it comes to the, let's say on LGBTQ rights, I am usually very vocal issues to do with sexual reproductive health and rights that access even safe abortion.

[00:05:22] So you find like I have layers of threats that manifests itself from different spaces, not only from the state, but also in different spaces that I challenge things that works against women. And girls. And when I say this, I'm talking to a lived reality that I've gone into exile because of the work I do.

[00:05:48] I've been assaulted by the police because of the work I do. I've been arrested, I've been intimidated, but I think the way I am with my [00:06:00] experience, the way I see it being as a feminist event was of vulnerability. And it's comes even with such a way it's very painful. Uh, such a weight, usually usually feel like you're known world.

[00:06:15] And that's why for me, I don't stop speaking out about investing on issues of women, human right defenders, because our vulnerability manifests itself in such a way that's our colleague who a male will not understand, uh, based on the things. Um, we go through the fact though we. I exist as a woman it's comes, it's the same struggle that I have to keep on fighting.

[00:06:37] I fight for other women. I fight for other people, but even me constantly have to keep on fighting and even the risk the way, um, I'm also bringing it involved. It's also like sometimes I'm denied even work. I've been blacklisted in spaces. I've been whitelisted in spaces because of the work I do. So it's very risky, but at the same time, it's usually inspiring, [00:07:00] uh, seeing the results.

[00:07:02] And seeing also people are appreciating when the gains come in post sometimes gains take some time. So it's in that journey that, um, it's, it's a, it's a romantic journey, but at the same time of struggle at the same time, it's also painful because of the risk that comes with it.

[00:07:18] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: Thank you very much, ladies, for sharing your reflections with us. Rachael, you had revealed to us that you grew up in the informal settlement of Mathare is the second largest settlement in Nairobi. More than half a million people live there in a very confined space. There's hardly access to water, electricity, sanitary facilities, and health. How would you describe life there for a young girl?

[00:07:51] **Rachael Mwikali**: Um, one thing to acknowledge is that yes, I've been born in Mathare . I'm very proud of that. And I [00:08:00] still live in Mathare even, not at the moment. Um, life wasn't easy growing up there and even it's not still easy being there. Um, like if I look, I don't want to give an example of. Of the desk, like without a lived experience.

[00:08:16] And that's why I believe this, even this conversation is important. So Rachael grew up in Mathare. She lives in Mathare. Um, I've been in an abusive relationship when I was still young as early as 13 for many years, uh, because of poverty and because even finding a food on the table was problematic. Uh, finding sanitary towel was problematic.

[00:08:39] So these are the things which I feel. And even now with my friends, And human rights. journey i feel i was was abused. I in different layers, one, the sex I was having is, are not consented sex. Um, that's defilement, uh, this person was a bit older than me and he used even to beat me in public universities. Um, [00:09:00] and the things that you have mentioned about even water and I always even like, um, there's a conversation sometimes, so we had to Juliet.

[00:09:08] Um, now reflecting back now with this COVID situation. It has been really hard because we had the population that, um, we asked to then, but the government does not provide a basic human rights for us, people living in informal settlements, access to water healthcare. So you'd find, um, we want the COVID and we have been told to wash and which should be our rights to

have water, but it's luxury there's no water. Water comes like. Two times a week. Uh, you can imagine, and especially being a woman, you can imagine you need to water constantly, and you have been denied your rights. With curfew. And this, for me, it feels bad because with curfew, our government, and I know most of African government, which are challenged, they didn't look the feminist approach and human rights [00:10:00] approach on dealing with curfew.

[00:10:01] I think in their mind, they thought everybody lives in this bougie. Uh, with two bedrooms or with toilets inside, but majority of the structure in Mathare, even the one that I live, these are, I call them aluminium apartments. That is 10 by 10 room. That's your bedroom. That's your sitting room. Now we have been told, stay at home.

[00:10:20] Curfew starts at seven. If you are press at night, you can go out. So you're forced, even your dignity has been taken away. You have to look. basins to go to use it. at night so that you can point in the morning, which denies your access to sanitation and also access to even like your dignity.

[00:10:39] Because if you're living in a house and you like 10 people in a family and your kids are also there, or you're starting your menses and your kids are there even makes it hard for you to, um, uh, to, to even like have that dignity of changing. And then in terms of health care, It it's it's, that's another area that I feel there's [00:11:00] more investment that needs to be done, like in the old Mathare constituency, where we live and where I am from. We only have three public hospitals. And when I say three public hospital, these are hospitals that are not close to the people and estimates of Mathare population, more than 500,000 people. And these hospitals, they don't have medications. Uh, they are not friendly, especially to young women. Uh, they are not friendly also to the majority of the population and even accessing medication is problematic.

[00:11:31] So you find. It's really hard going there as a girl, but also one thing that I usually say that the thing that has fueled my activism, my feminism is Mathare community. The thing that still thinks I had been discriminated, the levels of inequality in this country don't care about us. We're the ones who go to demonstrate faith for the rights of the majority.

[00:11:54] But the way we stick together and support each other, the level of organizing the most of organizations that are there, [00:12:00] like for example, organization coalition for grassroots, human right\ defender. It couldn't be where it is now, if it was in the Mathare, a community, but now looking at the levels of, I usually give an example.

[00:12:12] I would have been that statistic of girls that maybe died because of unsafe abortion or maybe died because of violent partner. Now. But I'm here and speaking this. So that's also the different stakeholders. To hear why it's important. Investing on girls and women struggle and work within the movement and why it's important even investing on women, you might defend us. Cause we do this work because of the struggles we have going on a personal level, not just with two people, but on a personal level. And ritual was being abused when she was sick. I, uh, when Richard was being, when I was, I was the sex I was having, which was not a consent, which for me, I see that as defilement, when most of the time, even now I have to struggle so much.

[00:12:58] Um, [00:13:00] uh, to tell people why they need to be respectful not see us as a second class citizen, uh, coming from certain community, uh, because we have not that privilege of even education. We have not, that privilege of even opportunities.

[00:13:13] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: Thank you very much for sharing your personal account and reflecting on your upbringing and your experiences while, uh, living in Mathare as a young teenager, I do share sincere empathy after hearing what you've reflected to us.

[00:13:29] Uh, Rachael, thank you very much for sharing with us. Juliet. I was sure that you have had some setbacks in your work. What kind of setbacks did you experience and how did or do you deal with those?

[00:13:42] **Juliet Wanjira** : I think one of the major setbacks that I have had in my work like Rachel, is the challenge to have a support for this work we do. It's work that needs constant morale because it's risky. And you're also just hoping that [00:14:00] you are safe wherever you are. As especially, my father was really against me doing activism because I was emotionally invested in it. My elder brother was killed by police. In Mathare. I also grew up in Mathare, listening to Rachael recount growing up in Mathare took me back and I

remembered all the struggles, no toilets, no bathroom, lack of sanitary towels, etc.

[00:14:27] And it's sad that we're still, we're still going on with that struggle of basic needs a hundred years later because Mathare is a hundred years old. So the lack of support from. Family. And also some of my friends who just don't understand why you would, they are the governments to do this. Why you would call out the government so strongly to do one or two things.

[00:14:51] Uh, and also sometimes the community does not understand why we fight against extrajudicial executions because there are some [00:15:00] Ella there. So there's an element of. Insecurity that they think is being handled when police kill people who they think to be petty thefts or petty criminals, but from where we stand from, we really do not stand for killings.

[00:15:15] We want the law to be followed. If someone has committed a mistake, let them be arrested. So fighting for, for the community. When the community is also not a hundred percent on your side has been a challenge, uh, on my end also resources. We really do not have resources. We do this on a voluntary basis.

[00:15:37] You're going to collect cases. But for me, I think also the emotional price that we paid doing this work is a lot. I got depressed this year. Just thinking about all the people I have documented, all the women I have worked with on their journey of losing their son. The post mortem the court cases and the fact that they wouldn't stop.

[00:15:59] That's what [00:16:00] that's, what was killing. That every time there's a police killing like last week. And if you guys in South Africa, saw the, the case that was straightened again, Ken, about the two brothers were killed by police, Kendra coma, brothers. That week we had seven young men chilled from our community.

[00:16:19] And so the fact that I, it was, it was crazy for me that we keep fighting. We've done everything. We've got the UN special opportune extrajudicial killings, but this challenge is ongoing that really had me. Um, but then I got to understand that the struggle is a protracted struggle, that the results are not a one off that event.

[00:16:41] It's a war. It's an ongoing struggle and that eventually we will win. It's a struggle. That is why it's a struggle. So I had to, um, collect myself back and understand and even take some time of the struggle. Just tell my team, I need, [00:17:00] I need a break. I need to rejuvenate myself. I need to isolate myself until I am well again, which is something most activists do not do.

[00:17:08] Because again, we do not have psychosocial support. Well, I'll walk and you just walk. There is mentally exhausting. It is work that really takes a toll on your mental health. We are young people. We are hopeful for the future, but the things that happening are killing a hope for a better tomorrow. So it was important for me, shake a break and just analyze things better to rejuvenate myself, to come. That was a major, major setback for me, but, um, aluta continua

[00:17:39] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: certainly I aluta continua on my sister. We, we do take note that one of the setbacks that you've shared with us is that the. The stability and, and the, and the status of one's mental health is one of the setbacks that are experienced during the fight for communities. And also during the fight [00:18:00] for upholding the rule of law at all times.

[00:18:04] At the beginning of our conversation, Juliet, we noted that you are particularly committed to women and children, and specifically try to address taboo topics such as female menstruation. Do you think this kind of education can help defeat female genital mutilation?

[00:18:27] **Juliet Wanjira** : Yes. I really think so. In at Mathare Social Justice Center, we have a fantastic warrior of female genital mutilation.

[00:18:36] Her name is Rama Wako from the Borana Community. So, and we've been doing a lot of community dialogues with this women, this young women talking about our rights as women, our rights as children, um, it's sexual. Sexual reproductive health rights. And we have seen a significant [00:19:00] decrease in the number of FGM and also early marriages and enforced marriages.

[00:19:05] So that has in fact, that is one of the major successes we celebrate at mother's social justice center. So I really do believe that these are conversations we need to have at all levels as a community, because one of

them. One of the disadvantages we have from colonialism is the degeneration of our society.

[00:19:25] Not in care of the children as we did back then, when we used to say, every child is our responsibility as a grown-up man or woman now is we're so individualistic, everyone's looking out for their children. So this community centers help to try and connect with our roots as Africans and look out for the children and speak to the children and teach the children what they need to know.

[00:19:51] So that's one of the major successes that we have. And one of the major, uh, I think practices, I would encourage people to do. [00:20:00] Community dialogues with young children and young women. Let's talk about FGM. Let's talk about, uh, menstrual health. Let's talk about our rights as children because they need to know somebody needs to teach them

[00:20:14] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: Female. genital mutilation is still a widespread practice in Kenya. Although fortunately, the trend is declining. In recent years, an increasing number of reports have noted. The growing difficulties of human rights organizations in Kenya, the scope for action is shrinking. Particularly legislative proposals have restricted the scope of action of Kenyan civil society.

[00:20:44] In recent years, the criminalization of human rights defenders. Has intensified arbitrary arrests and lengthy court proceedings have made the work of human rights defenders even more difficult, [00:21:00] especially in marginalized settlements, Rachael, um, would you please come in experts talk about a shrinking space in Kenya. Does this match your experience?

[00:21:13] **Rachael Mwikali**: Uh, thank you so much. This, this, like, I think for me, um, I was waiting for that question and, uh, talking to a level that I work in the grassroots at the same time. I sit in different spaces like mainstream, like Amnesty, Kenya, and now sitting in a donor space, like being advisory board member of a Danish in Kenya and their minister for development.

[00:21:38] So one thing I usually say, and this is very clear, they shrinking space civic space in Kenya. That's true. And it's becoming more. But the reality has been even for our organization coalition for grass Jumari defender former, that

is social justice center for the Honduras should just send her mama. Most of our work has been existing in shrinking [00:22:00] civic space.

[00:22:00] And when, I mean, shrinking civic space is that even lacking resources where we do a lot of work and on work is never given visibility. Where we expected to also give intellectual labor and our work not being compensated where majority of us have always been arrested. So the point I'm trying to make is that, um, we should not only focus shrinking civic space when mainstream organization. Bank accounts have been frozen when they don't access them.

[00:22:32] Like their money to pay either office or staff, but all of us should be shrinking and civic space. Where now, even during this time of COVID, um, Article 39 of the Kenian Constitution tells you, you have the right to protest, but now politicians, uh, started doing election, but activists cannot go and protest, even if you're afraid.

[00:22:53] That's public cannot go and protest that's shrinking civic space. Uh, yes, the laws, uh, very [00:23:00] problematic with the shift of the government at the moment, but what I believe in, from my experience organizing and like the way Juliet said, most of us are young. Like me I'm below 30 Juliet. You also, she's also below 30, right?

[00:23:14] Because of our work we're forced to eat, like because of experience and struggle. That's what made us go into this space at an early age and being able to know our movement has been and how it was before. It doesn't mean before it was much better, but with the 2010 constitution that we just celebrated last month and 27th of August, 2021, it gives us more power.

[00:23:35] But at the same time, this poll is being given now taken away by the current government. And that's where the role of the social movements comes. Like our movement was never registered, which also gave us a lot of power. Despite we experiencing, um, the other shrinking space that was not enabling for us to operate, but we had the power of telling community this is our movements, but the moment I [00:24:00] actually think, yes, I agree in terms of structures of organizations and also reporting to donor.

[00:24:05] But at the same time, I think it also shrinks the space when also donors decides who to give them money and do not give the money. who to sit in your whatever place and not to sit in whatever place. That's why for me, even though it is, I usually tell my fellow comrades, we need to understand if you're invited to a space.

[00:24:22] Is it an inverted space that you are there? Is this an invited space? Or it's a space that have been just called to just come and push the number. So this also pulls back to us in terms of how are you organizing differently? Like for us during this time of COVID you're like government, will arrest us, as most of us are broke we are poor activist that's for sure.

[00:24:43] we are poor feminists, but one thing we can use in terms of advocacy, since we don't have the privilege of bundle. Is that less use activism? Let let's use the arts. That's why like, you'll see our murals and most activists, even centers in Kenya for ativists that don't get a donor [00:25:00] money, they started using murals, like throw drawing murals that have messaged to say, we are against human rights violation.

[00:25:07] And the other thing, like, for example, I'm moving to run this very radical feminist campaign called Pussy Power Campaign. Yes. Would have said it's women power, but we feel women power has been used in the paychecks have normalize it. But we realized because the space was shrinking. When I say we women power it's just taken like, not seriously, but like let's bring this radical conversation that two people set asking the question, even the oppressors. Why the, word pussy power? Why is the biology usually use against women?

[00:25:36] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: And with all of that said, uh, looking at civil society, the NGOs, the social movements, the human rights defenders. Why do you think they continue to stand up for women's rights in Kenya, despite all odds?

[00:25:52] **Rachael Mwikali**: So for me, uh, it's usually very clear. Uh, one thing that we need to acknowledge, and [00:26:00] this also has been my critique, even in donors, there's so much money development, aid money that goes to governance that goes to ending corruption. That goes to, um, let's say accountability, but according to every reports, um, that was done this year, uh,

it said it's only 1% of development aid, uh, that goes to women's rights organizations.

[00:26:28] And you haven't trickled down, let's say to LGBTQ organizations and you haven't trickled it down to feminist led organization. So, um, clearly we are the ones who experienced a lot of challenge as women as girls, but. The investment is it's like even not even a drop in the ocean and the risk that's there is that we experience and keeping in mind that women, we are not homogeneous.

[00:26:54] The struggle for sex workers is another struggle. The struggle now a day we are dealing with, even in Kenya [00:27:00] is femicide struggle that we have pushed even many people to understand. First, if a woman has been killed, that's first violence against women, and we can't use even the, uh, the, the moral card to victimize women or young women, when they up constant consent relationship with someone and humanizing the patriarchy, I cannot humanizing the victim.

[00:27:27] So for me, I still feel that, um, it's systematic and it's something that also, uh, we have to keep on fighting. And the fact that for me, I usually say personal is political. I've gone through this. I wouldn't , and to see another girl or another woman go through the same thing. I don't care which part of the world you're in, but the fact it exists. All of us as women. The struggle is the sum of that affect us is, is, is, is, is all the same. Even if it [00:28:00] comes, even if it comes like we will have to deal with the class, but the fact you exist as a woman, patriarchy will never tell you. Okay. But also acknowledging the fact that. Uh, yeah. Women who benefits through patriarchy or now they're being socialized. So, so it was a lot of work also trying to convince our fellow sister that all of us are suffering because of patriarchy.

[00:28:23] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: It's clear that the advocacy for women's rights is continued in order to uproot and eradicate the injustices faced today in order for the future generations to not experience the same. Now, before we come to an end of this really exciting episode, please allow me two last questions, Juliet. Uh, if you could please come in with your reflections. Next year, Kenya will be holding presidential elections. What do you wish for the next elections? Moreover, I'm not talking

specifically about political [00:29:00] party preferences, but rather about the election proceedings.

[00:29:05] **Juliet Wanjira** : I wish that there will be no violence in this year's election because every election year in Kenya, we are sure to see violence. We are sure to see police beating civilians. We are sure to document cases of police killing. I really hope that next year there'll be no violence in elections in Kenya. I also really hope that the elections will not be rigged because it's also one of the things we've been experiencing in Kenya.

[00:29:33] The last elections we had, one of the IEBC commissioners, Chris Msando died. Many people say he was murdered. Uh, I really hope we are not going to see a repeat of that because it is a direct attack. to our sovereignty as the people of Kenya is saying to us that our votes doesn't really count or the powers that be gets to decide who becomes the next president.

[00:29:58] So I'm hoping to see a [00:30:00] free, fair credible election and a peaceful one at that I hope to see Kennan's understanding that this is a country. We cannot burn it. We are each other's keeper and that there are only two classes of us and of the rich. So I don't want to see poor people killing each other for somebody else, as we have been seeing in previous elections.

[00:30:26] And that is the basis of what political education at S as MSDC that let do not take up other people's struggle and kill your fellow poor person for their benefit of the other person. So I'm hoping to see. Sanity. And I'm hoping to see peace and that we remember that so many lives have been lost in their chairs for power and for power that does not benefit us at the ground at the end of the day,

[00:30:56] **Nangamso Kwinana**

: May the hopes you've shared with us become prayers that do, [00:31:00] uh, materialize and come to fruition. Now the population of Africa is 75% youths. How are we preparing for our future? For a future full of freedom.

[00:31:14] **Juliet Wanjira** : We need to teach our African youth, our true history because without knowing who, where we are coming from, there's no way of repairing for a future.

[00:31:23] We do not even understand why we are here in the first place. So we need to work on, and I don't know who is able to reach out to African youths collectively because also our special movie. Have not been working together. For example, we don't work with the social movements in South Africa. We see them, we cheer them on.

[00:31:41] We want to, uh, we, we want to be like the radical movements of South Africa, but there's no link. There's no, we are not coming together as Africans to try and sort out our problems. And I think that's the, as the biggest undoing we are having right now in the continent, everyone is doing their little thing.[00:32:00]

[00:32:00] But in their own corners, everyone is trying to better Africa and better the world, but we are not coming together to do it. We are trying here in Kenya, we have realized that's one of the biggest challenges we have as the civil society. So we are trying to come together. So because next year is a big year and we need to have, we need to be together.

[00:32:19] But for Africa, I haven't seen that. Uh, I haven't seen anyone try to put out that initiative, but it is important because even as the youth are 75%, who's organizing the youth. Who's talking to the youth. Maybe, maybe there are people doing that at grassroots levels, but we need an umbrella organization for youth in Africa.

[00:32:42] In fact, I was thinking about that this morning when I woke up. Because Africa is for the youth. Africa is a youthful continent, but we're not preparing our youths for the Africa. We want to see there's no preparation that's taking place per se, because our education system is absolutely [00:33:00] terrible. Especially the history that our people are learning in school is history that makes them feel inferior is history that you are not proud of.

[00:33:09] Our history. For example, here in Kenya starts with slavery. How we by enslaved other people. But when you go, when you do your own personal research on your history, actually a proud can. I am very proud. I'm a very proud Kenyan today. But after going through, I'll add real true history that we fought, that we stood our ground, that all we wanted was our land and freedom, but we are not really taught that.

[00:33:34] And even if it is stored, it is really subdued. It's almost like they don't want you to know who you really are. So I think we need that. We need a youth umbrella for Africa so that now we can start having those discussions.

[00:33:49] **Rachael Mwikali:** And maybe add something on that we need to bring youth in decision-making platform and not just youth to be seen. We are taking books, but [00:34:00] youth to come up with their cause, you know, youth, we have different ideas, um, creative ideas, uh, and also like. We know our struggle, the way struggle, evolve in different countries. You can't use Kenya as a marking scheme, let's say for Senegal. It, it it's, it's, it's hard, but those underlying issues that all of us are going through.

[00:34:21] Like for example, an employment, it's a big issue in the African continent. I usually feel bad seeing my brothers and sisters dying in Mediterranean sea. Going to look for opportunities in Europe and Africa is a rich continent. Africa is a innovative continent Africa. We had the, like we had the brain, we are feeding Europe and I feel, look, Europe is collapsing. Africa we are still strong. But we should center this conversation, ensuring that we appreciate, because ideally is that even the youth, we have youth in different spaces and [00:35:00] not tell the youth can we make news as Rachael Mwikali, but in different specific benefits, business or private sector, are they doing a business with human rights, that in line with human rights and not oppressing at the same time, are we holding our government to account?

[00:35:16] They see from us and going and investing in European or US money that is meant to ensure that this continent can be able to support itself, like the way my spiritual life, um, commorade who passed away, uh, the, from a president of, um, Burkina Faso like the way he was able to ensure like women are put in the center, youth are put in the center of this discussions.

[00:35:41] So every discussion I believe now for that are supposed to go on, should not go without youth being involved. And when, I mean, youth is gender inclusive and even youth who are living with disability because you can live the most in the picture. They also youth population.

[00:35:57] **Nangamso Kwinana:** As we conclude, I do wish to appreciate you, Rachael and Juliet. Thank you very much for the personal reflections and interesting insights that you have both shared with us.

Some of the things that stood out for me from this conversation with Rachael and Juliet are that:

- The issues facing women are diverse and many. With the covid 19 pandemic restrictions, it was clear that the government perhaps didn't understand the priorities and routines of women - specifically women living in informal settlements, as they were not able to access water when they needed to and water only arrives every two weeks.

One can only imagine the impacts of this on female health issues and things like menstruation. Not only a practical consideration but an issue of dignity and basic human rights.

- I was impacted by both Juliet and Rachael's personal experiences of gender-based violence as well as the fact that they put their lives on the line doing the activism work that they do. This is work of passion and purpose - a great inspiration to all of us.
- This work comes at a tremendous personal cost - their families don't always understand and support their work, their own mental health is impacted and then there's the discouraging fact that only 1% of development support funding is directed towards the advocacy of women's rights which makes it difficult to create sustainable solutions.

This has been our Kenya episode of "Let's talk human rights – the FNF Africa podcast exploring human rights issues". We hope you enjoyed it!

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