

Michael Jeh

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This month we speak with Michael Jeh about living the values of a White Ribbon Ambassador through his personal and professional life.

What is your day job?

I'm a wildlife ranger/guide in Africa and I run education programs for elite sporting teams, schools and community groups, specialising in DV prevention and respect for women issues. I'm also a cricket writer for international news agencies.

How long have you been a White Ribbon Ambassador?

I became an Ambassador in 2016.

Why did you decide to become an Ambassador?

It was a natural extension of the work I do. I was initially hesitant to even consider becoming one because I thought it was for celebrities but when I realised that it was for people who could make a difference in this space, I followed the process with enthusiasm.

In what ways have you been involved in the White Ribbon social movement?

I have run White Ribbon events in my community. The nature of my work is such that I am constantly speaking at schools and sporting clubs about the importance of this issue. Most importantly, I am involved in a very personal way through my daily actions and being a White Ribbon Ambassador to the other men/boys in my life.

Why is Gender Equality important to you as an Ambassador?

Without gender equality to underpin the *raison d'être* of the White Ribbon message, we will never make meaningful progress towards eliminating the more insidious problem of violence. In my opinion, respect, true respect that transcends symbolism or semantics, is the cornerstone of this movement. Respect is impossible without a genuine commitment to equality. Equality does not necessarily mean homogeneity or a lack of diversity between genders. But what it means to me is an undeniable admission (by men) that unless we are prepared to admit that gender equality is still a long way from reality, we cannot take steps towards bridging that gap.

What goals do you hope to accomplish as an Ambassador in the future?

I'm conscious of the limited scope of my influence but that won't stop me from trying to be at the vanguard of a movement that tries to address one of the most important issues of all time. My goal is to get males to realise that this is not an 'us and them' issue. It is also not a blame game. We should not feel guilty for what has gone before us because guilt alone will not solve anything. But if we can take responsibility (as distinct from guilt) for this issue, then we (males) are compassionate enough to begin to address this ongoing issue that affects the women in our world who mother us, cherish us, befriend us, make love to us and make us complete. It might be Utopian but I want to be the sort of Ambassador that empowers men to tackle this issue head-on rather than making men feel ashamed or guilty about the past. Not every man represents the problem but collectively, we



are the solution. But it has to come from a place of respect and equality or it will forever be stuck in a paternalistic, tokenistic response to a problem that can no longer be seen as a woman's issue, that's why I'm a White Ribbon Ambassador. I look at my 11 year old daughter and I want her to experience a world that my mother, my sisters and my wife will never fully appreciate.

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