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'I'm sick of it' - Rising sports star Mea Motu calls time on domestic violence

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'I'm sick of it' - Rising sports star calls time on domestic violence

New Zealand **World Champion Bantamweight Boxer Mea Motu** isn't keeping quiet about her past and hopes her experience will help others like her escape abusive relationships.

In an in-depth interview on **30 With Guyon Espiner**, pro-boxer Mea Motu opened up about the horrific abuse she endured for 10 years at the hands of her then-husband, crediting her children for saving her life on two occasions.

"My daughter saved my life. Seven or eight years old. Saved my life.

"She put her life in front of a knife.

"The knife [would] have stabbed me and should have killed me."

On another occasion, her ex-husband drove a car towards her, only stopping when her son jumped in front to save her.

Motu, who typically comes across as cheerful, relaxed and in control, tears up when recalling how close she came to dying if it hadn't been for the protection of her two oldest kids.

"My kids were so innocent, and so vulnerable, but they weren't in fear because they would rather save my life.

"They're like my guardian angels. They fight for me, so why can't I fight for them?

"That's what gives me strength and courage."

Mea Motu's rise in the world of pro-boxing has been nothing short of meteoric.

Despite finding some success in amateur boxing in her teens alongside her sister, National Amateur Champion Sally Motu, she didn't return to the ring until 2020.

Since then, she's broken a string of boxing records in New Zealand, fought with a broken rib to win the world boxing super bantamweight title and **defended that title with a dislocated shoulder**.

"It's really mental," she explained in the interview with Guyon Espiner. "The physical is the easiest."

** 30 with Guyon Espiner comes out every week on **RNZ**, **Youtube**, **TVNZ+** and wherever you get your podcasts.*



Mea Motu in the studio for 30 with Guyon Espiner. Photo: RNZ

'I only just learned how to open a bank account'

It's that same mental control inside the ring that drives Motu's passion outside the ring - calling out the perpetrators of abuse and helping others like her find the courage to escape.

"I'm sick of it. I've seen too many females - and I've seen too many males - and too many kids, living under gang members, living under the control of narcissistic people.

"I'm sick of it and I want [domestic abuse victims] to voice it," she said.

"They always shut us up by beating us up and they think the more they beat us up, the more we stay silent and that's what they tried to do to me.

"And I was like, no, I'm not going to. I've had enough.

"Now I'm going to use my voice and show that if you've got an abuser out there, speak about them, tell people, tell your family, don't be ashamed."

Motu's experience of marrying young at 17 to a controlling partner meant she's only now learning how to navigate everyday life admin tasks.

"The abuser steals our identity, so we can't escape.

"They take our passport, they take everything, our driver's license.

"I only just learned last year how to open a bank account. I'm 34 years old, and I just learned this last year.

"And it's happening to so many of us out there."



Mea Motu at the Wahine Toa II fight week press conference. Photo: Photosport

Taking out the 'Trash Talk'

Motu also revealed that she refuses to participate in a big part of combat-sport culture due to those experiences.

"I'm not into trash talk. Yes, boxing is all about trash talk, and that's up to the individuals, that's up to them, that's the sport.

"But I don't do it because it's what I stand for, who I am. I'm a role model. I lead by example.

"If I go and trash talk ... that's normalising abuse and showing our children that it's OK to speak to people like that.

"I'm sick of seeing our children looking at sports athletes, big role models, and they're going off, trash talking, belittling people.

"I leave my fighting for the ring, and I lead by example."

Taking the fight to the world

After 20 matches and 7 KOs, Motu hasn't lost a professional fight yet.

Now she's looking forward to going after even more world titles, which will mean more campaigns offshore.

"Oh, don't worry. I will have them. I know I will. I believe in myself. And it doesn't matter how I fall; I'll just get back up and I'll keep going until I've got them.

"Because there's no limit to me."

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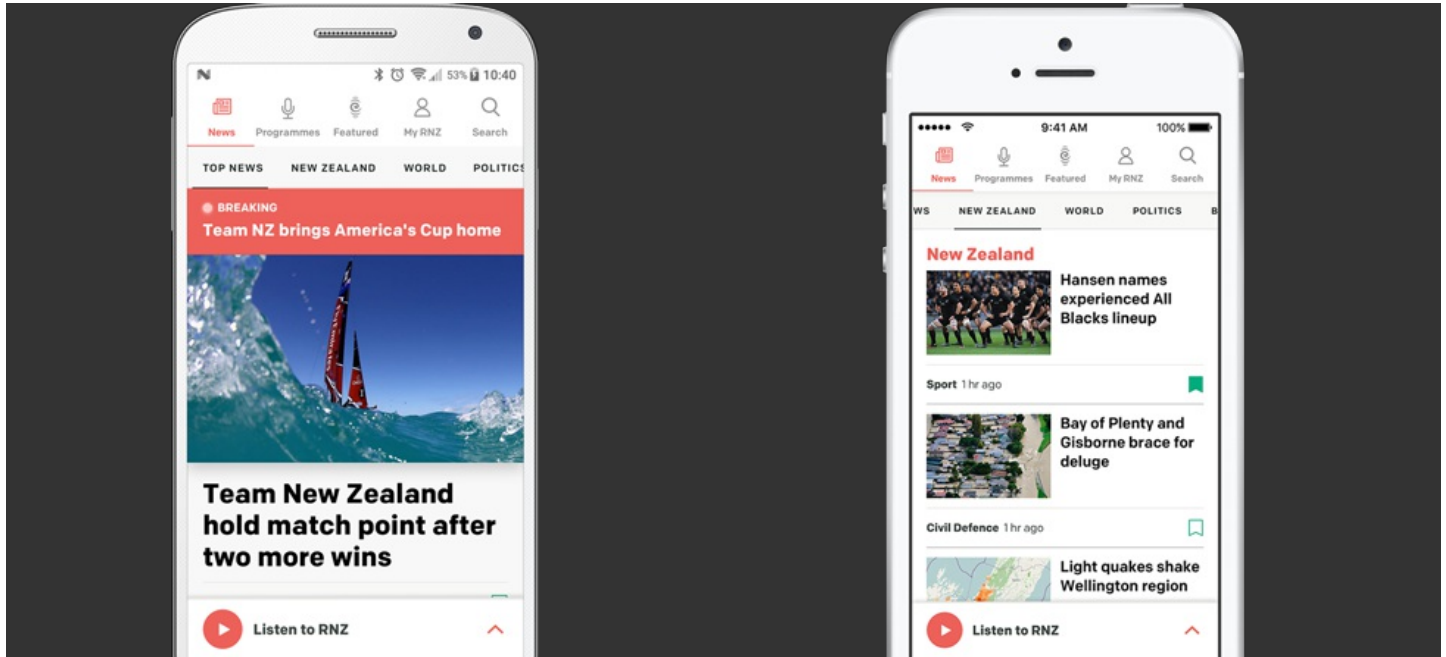


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