

The Maya Centre hosted a sparkling reception in The River Room at the House of Lords on Monday May 9th providing the centre with a chance to showcase and celebrate its work with friends and funders

The venue did just as it promised and offered a lovely view over the Thames! The room was full of Maya well-wishers from journalists and politicians to health managers and heads of other charities as well as those more directly associated with Maya's work such as existing funders, trustees, patrons (but sadly not long term patron, Jeremy Corbyn, who appears to be busy doing other things) and the Centre staff, including its dedicated body of therapists.



Baroness Doreen Massey, a recent patron of the Maya, introduced a range of distinguished speakers from the world of politics beginning with the Speaker of the Lords, Baroness de Souza who spoke about the global importance of representation of women's interests in public and political life. Catherine West MP and Sarah Champion MP also spoke eloquently on integrating women's experience into policy making, stressing the importance of the Centre's work (now in its 32nd year) and the need to go on supporting it.

Maya Chair, Rebecca Harrington, then introduced what was perhaps the most moving part of the evening: extracts from the unique MY VOICE project, audio testimonies, from some of the women helped by the Maya Centre who talked about their disturbing experiences of violence and abuse and how their work with Maya therapists has helped turn their lives around.

The heartfelt statement from one woman seemed to sum up what Maya aims to do.

'I am 59 years of age and I want to do more than exist. I want to *live*.'



After hearing from the women, the room buzzed with discussion and debate as guests broke up into groups, under Baroness Massey's expert guidance, sharing their experiences and thoughts on what they had heard and what it made them think.



Brief report backs highlighted everything from the complex and powerful ties that can bind a woman to her abuser to the significance of the media in enabling change, with the current Helen/Rob storyline of *The Archers* highlighted as one important way in which the wider public are becoming educated about the complex reality of domestic abuse.

It was a terrific evening, and one that inspired many to support the Centre in new and different ways. Just as importantly, it reminded all of those involved with the day-to-day work of the centre what incredibly important work they do.

Melissa Benn and Jill Dawson
Proud patrons

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