



HEAD FEMALE COACH BEGINS NEW ROLE

I'm Simone and I'm 25. Raised by my mum in Porirua, I went to Aotea College and have spent the majority of my life in the Porirua community. Like my mum, who was a social worker, my background is in the non-profit and charity sector. I'm currently working towards a BA majoring in Education and Te Reo Māori at Victoria University. My greatest ambition is to make a positive difference in the lives of those who need it most. I'm a passionate advocate for social issues; a fairer society, women's rights, domestic violence, education and child poverty in NZ.

During my time working at Outward Bound, I was lucky enough to become involved with the Naenae Boxing Academy. Like everyone else, I was inspired and profoundly affected not only by the outcomes they were getting, but the way they were getting them. But for me, there was something missing. For every young boy I see in that gym who could be struggling at home or at school, getting into trouble or lacking in confidence, there's also a young girl out there with a similar issue. But where are those women who are helping them? I lived in a community where I saw my fair share of rough, and I've personally been in situations that no girl or young women should ever be in. Things could have gone very differently for me, but I was lucky enough to have strong female role models to empower me and give me the skills to avoid that bad road altogether.

So once I saw that missing piece, I wasn't going to give up, no matter how much hassling it took! Not only do girls deserve something like this, but they need it. My vision is simply to provide girls and young women the same thing that the boys have – a safe haven, role models, a physical outlet, discipline, a place to become strong; physically and mentally, a place to learn. My vision isn't to see girls trying to knock each other out or get hurt, that's not what it's about. It's about empowerment, inner strength and confidence. I understand there's a lot of stigma attached with females and boxing, but I believe now is the time to challenge that. I'm passionate about working with everyone – families, schools, social workers, parents, teachers, the whole community – to break down those barriers and get our girls experiencing some of the success the boys are having. It's a long-term vision, but I'm dreaming big! If the fellas can keep doing their thing making champion men and I do my bit to start creating some empowered, confident women, we're making a whole new breed of youth, which means a whole new, brighter future. Exciting, right?!