



Beyond & Behind the  
**FACES OF HIV & AIDS**

Compiled by Wadzanai Garwe



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## Cover Art: Word from the Artist Ras Silas Motse

I find that people run away from vulnerable depictions. Most people will say the reason they run away from vulnerable depictions is because it makes them feel sad. **VULNERABILITY IS WHAT PEOPLE HIDE FROM!** I want to embrace that vulnerability. Hence, my signature work of having slaves in my background, showing slaves being bound and on the slave ship. I love to celebrate the pain. I want to internalize the pain. I do not want to avoid the pain. People run away from the dark side only wanting to celebrate the bright side. The darkside of HIV and AIDS is what I basically wanted to show with the cover artwork. People run away from brutally honest and brutally depicted images and I chose that piece because it speaks to what it is without having to hide anything. I know people will want a fantastic story that's bright and lovely with smiles and all of that. However, we are not living in that world only. We also have to embrace our bruises and embrace what happened. If you look at my signature with the slaves and I'm putting them out there, illustrating them in different colours to speak honestly about what is on the plate.

So I think for me it was from that angle to say that yes things were bad and things got bad but I am, and yes I am proud to say and to celebrate that, yes I healed from it, and I'm still healing. I'm not hiding it. I'm not covering it with a brighter story. So we do have different stories. The stories of the women in this narrative provide a range of situations.



My artwork represents the specifics of a snapshot of a woman in a given moment. My artwork represents this moment. In my art, I love to narrate moments in space and time. I don't narrate the whole story just the moment in a particular space and at a particular time. So this moment is of a lady, left abandoned and lying down in the middle of nowhere after being raped. I used to see these very scenarios of my mother lying this way after my father came home drunk and beat her up. For me that imagery, when I thought about the current situation of Black Women being raped and everything else that's been happening. Some women got the virus via rape. They got HIV due to rape. It's what I am addressing. Unapologetically and brutally speaking about it without having to shy away. If men are doing this to women why are we covering it up? If I can go deeper, it talks about a lot of emotions! It is slightly censored as I could have made more graphic different poses in different situations. I did it this way to give it a bit of wonder and to allow people to think and to talk about it.

The most important thing about a piece of art is not a perfect story. It is to ignite stories, conversations, and emotions. That's what we want. When someone looks at it they should feel a certain way.

So for me the book, when I looked at some of the stories that I have read, I think this artistic impression represents the depth of this cover page illustration. Unapologetically, it is a representation of the brutality of the stigma against HIV.

For me to be part of this was to basically share my pain. I have been blessed with the ability to psychologically and spiritually get into someone's pain and share the pain. I have that particular blessing. So why not share it.

I represent those who cannot speak!

## **Reactions from the Artist, Ethnographer, Copy Editors, Translators and Transcribers.**

*Good morning Wadzi, I hope you are good and everything is well. For me the reason why I chose to respond to having my story as part of this beautiful transcript was that obviously HIV and AIDS impacted my life when my parents passed away. I had to take over the responsibilities of parenthood and brotherhood. I wanted to show the impacts of HIV as being both physical and mental. I wanted to show how I grew up and the culmination of my life lived. I wanted to show how broad the impact is, not only on the infected, but also on those left behind. HIV and AIDS directly impacted me. I wanted to show that one could live and survive after HIV. Not only for the one who gets the virus but also for the survivors. It has made me the strong person I am. I can do things on my own and take on my inherited responsibilities. I wanted to celebrate that power. Collaboration is one of the things I have always wanted to do. I needed a platform to voice out and tell my personal story. Not just via art, but also through words. I had to learn to adapt as I was left to understand, teach, support and motivate myself. It is one of the heaviest things I grew up doing. I had to make sure that I was and I am comfortable each day. It did affect me mentally and it led to physical issues as I had difficulty taking care of myself.* **Silas Motse Artist and Contributor**

*I am a trained Oral History practitioner. I use the methodology in my research work to generate empirical evidence on especially women's lived experience. I decided to participate in this project as I believed I could lend my expertise to amplify the voices of authors who obviously had powerful narratives and experiences which needed framing and professional support.* **Gaynor Paradza Ethnographer and Contributor**

*Hey Wadzi, I decided to take part in helping with editing the stories for your book because it was clearly a passion project and I am cause driven. I also loved that you were providing a safe space for people to tell their story. I believe that a person's areas of tribulation is their area of ministry, and the contributions in the book will definitely minister to many. With all the potential impact of the project, offering editing services was a no brainer for me!* - **Farayi Mangwende Copy Editor**

*The main reason I participated was to be able to let out feelings that I have been keeping inside me for so long, the loneliness and pain I went through. The rejection I sometimes face and not being able to say it out in fear of disappointing or offending some people. Reading some of the stories, I have come to realise that we do go through emotional trauma that sometimes we bear in fear of being labelled or rejected. Some of the issues you can only understand when you are in that situation and the project is just there to let us know we not alone and that things will be OK no matter how bad it may seem.* - **Patience Mpundu Shona Translator**

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## Quotes from the Authors

- For me to be known nationwide that I am living with HIV was and still is liberating in the sense that it is out there, there is no need for people to suspect and start wondering how they will approach me.
- I had a huge task telling my colleagues, at which time I was leading a team taking care of the terminally ill in the comfort of their homes surrounded by loved ones. I say it was a huge task because even though some of those we were taking care of were dying of AIDS, one would hear jokes about AIDS. Someone amongst us would be having a cough and you would hear something like “Move away from me with your AIDS” jokingly. Here I was, with the real HIV, not coughing or sick. I had to be bold and address my colleagues one by one.
- Giving power to women and girls to prevent HIV infection is a pillar to ending Aids. Mind you, females bear the brunt of HIV infections, the HIV virus has the face of a woman.
- It wasn't a good time there, because they knew about my Mom's status, and treated my Mom and me so differently. It was really difficult for me to really adjust. It became hard to continue my friendship with my friends, whenever we had the health education class, the teachers made it look like people with HIV are condemned to death and people shouldn't be around them, so I knew that if anyone got to know, they wouldn't be friends any longer, so I developed the habit of leaving people before they even had the chance to get to know me. I didn't disclose my status because of the reaction of my peers during the health education classes. By this time I was in junior high class 3 in 2010, I knew my status and I stopped having close friends. If only the teachers didn't make it scary and humiliating. Proper information should be taught in schools, to avoid stigmatization and discrimination. Because there were times they would throw a joke around saying, when someone becomes lean after a short sickness, they have HIV. Somehow I felt it was directed to me, because I always lose a little weight after recovering from a sickness.
- I had the baby on the 8th June 1996 and it was a girl, I cherish her but life was hard for me so I couldn't give her my best. I was determined to go back and complete my senior secondary school but my father wouldn't help and my brothers were all still battling to finish up school too so no one could actually help me so I resorted to buying cassava from farms so I could make garri (the creamy granular flour obtained by processing the starchy tuberous roots of freshly harvested cassava). It wasn't easy but I knew I was not where I ought to be so I persisted. I would dig the cassava by myself, pack it on my head and peel, wash and grind it. I would then set it on the “jack” then I would fry it and take it to the market to sell. I also started selling black market fuel so with the profit from these sales I enrolled myself back in school and my entire village stood still for that singular decision I took as it was a first time to see a single mom going back to school even though some never believed I ever go back.
- Yes at first it was very difficult to accept my HIV status, but as soon as I accepted that it is what it is, I started pushing the wagons of life in a more positive way. To continue to live positively has a great impact on other people around you especially the affected and afflicted. I took it upon myself to stand firm so that I could inspire and help out other HIV positive individuals like me. I came to realise and would like the whole world to know that we are all potential victims of HIV/AIDS. No one is immune to contracting the virus, but it is up to society to spread useful information far and wide, so as to protect the young generation mostly. This is so that we can have an HIV free generation in years to come. Although the use of Condoms is not full-proof in preventing

infections people need more sensitisation on the use of them. Abstinence is best but with hormones firing inside young bodies it's a challenging feat to achieve or adhere to.

- I went to a local Miami clinic to find out my blood specimen status after slowly learning about the HIV/AIDS scourge. They examined my blood and it came out positive for HIV. I was only 18 years old. I had met and slept with hordes of girls in the streets as I was one of the Gang leaders. I never used protection as I had no reason to. I never knew that I would get infected I thought it only happened to gay people. That myth was widely shared amongst many in the streets of America.
- What exposed me most is the fact that I was a Gang Leader who had a lot going in terms of privileges. If for instance a female wanted to join our gang she would come through me and part of the initiation involved having sexual intercourse, unprotected sex. So if you can comprehend how many ladies were in the group of hundred and most if not all would have passed through my vetting which meant sexual intercourse interviews. More girls from high schools also became my conquests. This crude behaviour put me at high risk of HIV infection hence to this day I do not even know who infected me. I was ignorant to HIV/AIDS ways of infection. I regret never using condoms. Nobody had ever told me about sexual reproductive health.
- The story of my life is it was hard, super hard. As I fought the HIV/AIDS stigma. Losing both parents, how people treated me, and how my father abused my mother. I had to do things, which I regret, yet I went through it. At times bullying people, stealing from shops, drinking and living dangerously. It is all part of an AIDS orphan's life. Mine turned out great but some are not so fortunate. Some end up perishing due to lack of support from their families. Therefore, I hope this story does educate all those relatives surrounded by the HIV affected, to wise up and treat them well and in a dignified manner.
- It was painful and not easy to swallow. It was not easy for me to deal with that kind of a situation. A child can never really remember to bath on time or launder clothes and change. So my appearance also added to the reason for mockery. I started isolating myself from other kids as I felt out of place, like an outcast. It really stressed me, as every child needs time to play and mingle with others. It was so heavy to deal with.
- I started feeling the heat at school, as fellow students would point and whisper, the stigma was just unbearable. HIV status can change your social life abruptly! You know how it is, when you live in a small estate, the whole farming community started asking leading questions and it was so traumatic. People were always on our case. I think not everything was as bad since my mother was still there and she would always take care of me.
- The word "positive" traditionally brings hope and bliss. This positive state brought a heap of negative thoughts, painful life experiences and horrible memories. I do not have a pinch of an idea about where and when I got infected by this pandemic that brings shivers down humanity's spines. I have had to perpetually deal with whispers that trail behind me as I pass by gossips loitering in my street.
- Looking back, I wonder how and why I wasted my time hanging on to that relationship for so long. He was a ruthless sex maniac. His mind processed nothing else but sex. 'If you can't give it to me, I cannot go hungry. I have to relieve myself by getting it from someone else until we get married' he would bluntly say in my face. I do not understand why he had this hold on me. It was as if I was under a spell. I called it quits one Sunday afternoon when Rex tried to force himself on me. He had suddenly turned into a fierce monster, with bloodshot eyes exploring my figure from hair to toe. I responded with more fierceness than he expected. A sudden adrenaline rush flushed through my veins. I knew I had to defend myself. At first, I thought of screaming my lungs out, but I was quick to control myself. I dismissed the idea, as rescuers would then ask why I had locked myself in with Rex in the first place.

- Makuhwa munharaunda aibva atowedzerwa tumunyu netu mhiripiri. Unonzwa vamwe voti: "Murume wavo akafa makore mashanu apfuura asi vachiri kuratidzika kuve vakasimba, nhai!"
- Mai Duma naMai Nzou vanondikwazisa nenyemwerero yezino irema pazviso zvavo, asi pavanongofunga kuti ndafamba nhambwe dzirikure zvekuti nzeve dzangu hadzichavanzwi, vanoenderera mberi nekundireva. Mhepo yaiuya kwandiri saka ndakanzwa vachitaura zvekuti nguva ya famba sei ndisati ndave nemucherechedzo wekuve murwere weShuramatongo (AIDS).
- As I write with tears on my cheeks, I sometimes feel overwhelmed. Sometimes I find myself breaking down and not being able to continue writing because bitter memories are overwhelming. Yes I was spared by the virus but it was not through my ability, nor my intelligence. I may not know what it means to live with the virus but the pain I suffered because of it is much more than any reader can comprehend. It was so frustrating and painful that we did not know if there would be any survivors among us?
- We feared it was the end of the human race.
- Souls are fragile- handle with care!
- As I waited for my sister outside a bank at the Sam Levy Village one day, I bumped into my husband's colleague. My sister pitched up and walked right past us. The guy remarked, "you know that lady, she is mad". He quickly revised his statement when he realised I had affirmed that the lady was my sister "she is extremely clever isn't she". I was gutted. The person who carried my sister's name did not resemble her at all. I felt so sad.
- In conclusion, I would like to say to all the spouses who were abused but are still alive, stay strong. Educate people in your community; including all those on social media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and others, that HIV does not kill, and it is not like the Covid-19 yet, you treat it unfairly. So let us support our family and friends living with HIV/AIDS. Everyone can be infected so we should not laugh or hate one another. Don't be discouraged, no matter how much you get bullied, work with those who want to work with you, choose true friends, because those who protect and promote their folks will never lose hope.
- To my fellow PLHIV, do not stop taking the ARVs no matter what.
- I ask! When is the appropriate time to speak about dangerous and reckless behaviour? Is it that time when we stand up and testify about the deceased at the funeral? No! The best time to start is when a person is not sick; in the gym teach them the pros and cons of protecting themselves from HIV. In fact, HIV/AIDS sensitization should start at Primary school and in all spheres of life.
- Once bitten twice shy. I looked forward to the solace of my husband's death, but I had no idea I was soon to get the shock of my life. I stood accused of witchcraft, not literally but I was being accused of infecting my husband with the HIV virus due to my purported infidelity. Thus, I was labelled a killer, a witch, and other ugly names. I was also standing accused of wanting to further infect my Babamukuru (you shall read more about the issue of my Brother in-law). Some of my in-law relatives were already convinced that witchcraft alone had taken my Man. The other lot, who are the majority, were and some still believe the theory that I am to blame for the demise of my husband. They argued that nothing else would have taken him away, as he was from an invincible set of genes (Eland totem) and he was a strong man.
- Ndaive ndiinamakore gumi nematanhatu ndiine mukaka pamhuno. Hapana zvaizivikanwa pamusoro pe HIV /AIDS. Hapana chinorwadza sekuti munhu waunoyemura ne kushuvira kuti ugovewo mutsoka dzake afe rufu rwakadaro. Sevanasikana vekumaruwa taito yemurawo mabharani iyeyu. Mundangariro ndaive nemibvunzo yakawanda ndichingoti: Nhai Mwari chirwere rudzii ichochi? Zvaityisa. Hapana zvataiziva nezvechirwere ichochi.
- Now I enjoy everything in all the moments, any happy moment in my life, although they could be temporary. Already for me, HIV is classified as one of the best things that have ever happened to me in my life. My life continues to be difficult because I have to make choices and make important life decisions, as a single parent, HIV-positive woman, and mother of HIV-positive children.

However, through my diagnosis, I have found and empowered myself. I have found strength, courage, a voice, and a happy inner call to be motivated to live.

- A sentence by one of the parents still haunts me: **"Take your children with you and kill yourselves, all of you, and leave our children and us alone"**. That hurt, but I did not budge. "It is part of our lives now. We face this kind of mindset every step we take,"
- As a mother of three HIV positive children - living with HIV is more than just existence for me! It is also about motivation, change, and pride. In my community of Albania, I am considered an extraordinary person and one of the silent 'heroines' because of the life I was able to achieve despite the stigma. To face the stigma and discrimination of HIV, I used all the possibilities starting from accepting the new journey of my life. For my family and community, I advocated for the need to adhere to treatment, high self-esteem, need for updated information and education, and managing my psychological situation while using friends as an essential support system
- We went together, arrived at his home and indeed he had maize. He weighed out 2 buckets for me then said he wanted to get me something to eat. He came back with some biscuits and a drink. The drink tasted strange, as if it had a substance in it. I drank it and then I became intoxicated and he raped me. This was a very painful experience in my life, I went back explained to the people I lived with whom I regarded as parents, what had happened. They called the guy to question him and told him that they were going to report him to the police. He begged them not to and said that he loved me and wanted to marry me the only problem was that he was already married so he wanted to make me his second wife.
- Makore iwaya chirwere cheshuramatongo (HIV/AIDS) yaive isiri nyore, kutaura nezvacho. Kare kare ikako, zvaitowoneka munhu achifamba kuti uyu anenge aneutachiwana kana kuti arikurwara ne AIDS. Zvakadaro, mumwe wevana vemukadzi iyeyu wechipiri aive neutano usina kunyatsoti tsvikiti. Mwana iyeyu ayisa kura zvinotarisirwa pavana vadiki, kuti vati kwaku. Akatenge ave chirevo chemumusha, kuti haasikukura uye indonda. Vanhu vemunharaunda vaingo fambisa runyerekupe rwekuti mwana uyu anechirwere. Zvekuti dai mazuva iwayo ndakanga ndakawana ruzivo rwe Shuramatongo rwuzere, ndingadai ndakasiya imba nekuchimbudzika. Iri nzira yekutiza neupenyu hwangu. Asi sezvinei ndakango garawo ndichikwikwidzana naye Patuma.
- It is hard to have to take the medication on a daily basis. I pray for a miracle that would allow us to live freely without worrying and obsessing about blood that is contaminated. I pray for freedom from stigma. I pray to live long enough to see my children become adults and have their own kids. I pray to live.
- To more than 20 years of living positive with HIV, I am healthy and HIV has not had any negative impact on my health. I refuse to let HIV define me. Besides the trauma I suffered when I travelled in 2014, I have had an amazing relationship with the virus that I host in my body, I have suppressed it and never will it be detected again.
- There is something about believing that you are a carrier of disease. That thing kills the spirit. It is heavy and a burden to carry. I could no longer work efficiently because I had no one to talk to at work. "Why did I date a colleague to begin with?" I judged myself. He on the other hand praised me for my silence and he said I am a very kind human being for protecting our image at work.
- For those of us who made it to our 50s - our generation vanished before ARVs were made available, it was horrendous seeing a person with signs and symptoms walking in the street
- These are the vicissitudes of the aftermath of HIV and AIDS and how it can rob lives and livelihoods in a flash. All five children gone, leaving numerous grandchildren behind for my old aunt and uncle to fend for all of them. What a load to bear!
- In the work that I have done in international nutrition globally, I have personally sought to volunteer my time to provide lectures, advise in the prevention, care, and treatment of HIV/AIDS to various communities. What has struck me the most and continually is how the world of being touched by

HIV and AIDS can be extremely isolating and lonely. Yet it need not be if only we reset our attitudes towards more love, and listening with compassion.

- He said to me close your eyes and imagine a recent ML Mercedes Benz parked outside with all its wheels removed and it's supported by rocks. I did and the vision still clear, reassures me that walking away from that marriage was the best decision I ever made.
- Although we sometimes starve due to lack of food, I have no choice but to take the medication. I suffer from anxiety often about taking pills without eating because I experience the side effects. The stress I end up experiencing at times weighs me down. I only take the ARVs even though they have conditions which I fail to meet because I've been through so many near death experiences. I don't want to die from defaulting. It is better to die from hunger.
- Mukatarisa mazuva andairwara. Pakaita muvakidzani wedu akanga ashaika. Asi vanhu nekugaroziva kuti Wellington ndiye murwere wemuraini, vakatanga kuungana pamba pedu kuunganira rufu rwangu. Ndaka kambaira ndikaenda pavari ndichirwara kudaro. Ndikasvikovaudza kuti: "Kana ndava kufa ndichakuudzai, ende zuva rangu rekufa ndini ndino kuudzai, kwete kuudzwa zvekunyepa".
- What pains me is the amount of stigma around. People who take their medication (meds) religiously are mocked so usually people stop taking their meds out of not wanting to be discovered and end up dying. I wish people knew that someone who is on Anti-retroviral therapy will have an undetectable viral load and therefore will not transmit the virus. Some people would rather sleep with someone who doesn't know their status than sleep with someone who knows and is adhering to their medication. So people are afraid to get tested because they don't want to know the results and those tested are afraid to openly take their meds so they end up defaulting.
- HIV can be a very lonely disease and that is why more understanding is needed
- So many times, I have been rejected even by those that promise to love me unconditionally. The sad reality is that stigma is still very much there in our societies, even within our families, and the onus is really on us, the infected, to look after ourselves physically and mentally. Especially mentally, people think that when you are sad or down *urikuzviitisa*. You just want people to feel sorry for you, but the mental struggles are real. There are days you doubt yourself.
- "How did you get HIV" is the first question I would get if I shared my status with a friend. Does it matter? This desire to place you in a box. Acceptable HIV – blood transfusion or you were pricked by a needle during a medical procedure. Unacceptable HIV – sex, especially homosexual sex. "Did your husband give it to you? No he's negative!" That confused them to no end. So let us speculate. How did I get HIV? I was a virgin at 21 – imagine. Then I decided I did not want to be a virgin anymore and picked an older guy. He was a fantastic person but a terrible lover – especially for the first time – giving him the gift of virginity". The mantles we take on for society become laughable in hindsight. Then I had the intense love story of one's early 20s. We had been at sister schools, he fit the profile of "a good family" and we were intellectually on par. What a "mind fuck" that relationship was! I was so in love until I was not. I broke both their hearts. I was also date raped twice, which was horrible, and a story for another book. I had one- night stands with three men – so pick one. Where did I get HIV? I do not know. It is a process of elimination. Could I blame the man whom I presumed infected me? Which one out of 7 and only one long-term. Does it really matter? No! It does not matter.
- Attend to your basic needs with compassion and allow life to ebb and flow

## About the Book

Wadzanai Valerie Garwe has been trying to date as a person living with HIV. Each time she tells someone that she is HIV positive the person either ghosts her, puts her into the friend zone, or she has to do a whole education especially to advise him or her that a person with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus. UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMISSABLE as long as the person takes their medication religiously and does routine blood tests. It is, of course, always advisable to wear condoms, however it is no longer mandatory as long as one has an undetectable viral load.

Rejection is soul destroying as is trying to educate a potential lover.

It is disheartening to carry the stigma for a disease that one may not have brought upon oneself.

Wadzanai is one of the lucky ones as she is an HIV activist; she speaks for many who cannot disclose their HIV status even to loved ones. Wadzanai would like this project to dispel some of the myths/conspiracy theories. As of 2022, Wadzanai is in her 30<sup>th</sup> year of being HIV positive. Out of 55 years, 54 percent of her life has been as someone living with the virus.

This book is Wadzanai's passion project. It is an anthology of lived experiences by people infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS virus and the pandemic. It is unique because it is done in original voices in any language of the author's choice. It is going to be distributed via whatsapp and email as a pdf. It is not just People living with HIV (PLWHIV). It is more than that. It is people infected and affected by HIV. It has been copy edited, transcribed and translated by some wonderful volunteers.

This should be the quintessential book on lived experiences. What we have been doing to date is not working. The statistics tell the story and now Covid is putting HIV and AIDS on the backburner.

### GLOBAL HIV STATISTICS<sup>1</sup>

- 28.2 million People were accessing antiretroviral therapy as of 30 June 2021.
- 37.7 million [30.2 million–45.1 million] people globally were living with HIV in 2020.
- 1.5 million [1.0 million–2.0 million] people became newly infected with HIV in 2020.
- 680 000 [480 000–1.0 million] people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2020.
- 79.3 million [55.9 million–110 million] people have become infected with HIV since the start of the epidemic.
- 36.3 million [27.2 million–47.8 million] people have died from AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the epidemic compared to 6.3 million deaths from Coronavirus as of May 2022. Coronavirus has a vaccine. Covid will never be the killer pandemic that HIV is and continues to be.

We need a new way to combat the stigma.

Wadzanai did a little quiz on Facebook. Do you know that 55 percent of the quiz respondents still thought they could catch HIV from kissing a person? 89 percent said they would rather not have a relationship with someone infected. That was a spot quiz.

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<sup>1</sup> UNAIDS HIV FACTSHEET <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet>

A quote from the executive director of UNAIDS Winnie Byanyima (@Winnie\_Byanyima) tweeted: “Despite compelling evidence that criminalization of key populations blocks access to HIV services & increases #HIV risk, discriminatory & punitive laws remain alarmingly common. Removal of harmful criminal laws is key to #EndInequalities #endAIDSby2030<sup>2</sup>.”

Whatever we are doing is not working. Maybe people need to connect to real people and real stories. Wadzanai’s story is about ageing with HIV. Other stories are different. Each story will touch your heart in a very personal and deep way.

These stories will help frontline workers working within HIV/AIDS ridden communities to get a better understanding of what the trauma of being HIV positive entails to the person who gets the diagnosis.

These lived experiences could be translated into several languages so that the world could understand the impact of the pandemic.

This book is the start to creating a movement that really helps to end the stigma. End transmissions by 2030. It is devastating that there are still children born HIV positive. That is part of the lack of knowledge.

Young people are saying they would never date a person who is HIV positive. What does that say to a young person born with the HIV virus? You are not worthy of love?

May this book help us to normalize HIV as a chronic disease and not one in which the stigma is a form of apartheid creating a “them and us” scenario.

We hope as the reader that this book will educate, inform and transform your life.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://t.co/3Z6MU5oDTU> <https://t.co/hGUshoYVg4> [https://twitter.com/Winnie\\_Byanyima/status/1478420192699035648?s=20](https://twitter.com/Winnie_Byanyima/status/1478420192699035648?s=20)

## About the Compiler



I wanted to compile this book because the stories of those who have been infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are missing in today's literature. We are part of the hidden generation. It seems we are supposed to stay in the shadows because HIV is a disease of sex. It is about shame and blame. I have lived with HIV for 30 years and for 24 of those years I had to stay silent because of the stigma and discrimination that could affect me. It was cathartic for me to put my story out there finally. I am a mother of two young adults, an author, a mental health and HIV activist, an executive coach, a mentor and a firm believer in the power of economic empowerment. I work in international development. My passion is in mentoring and coaching. I coach on topics involving workplace toxicity specifically bullying and harassment, grief, racism, HIV and mental health. I am a co-facilitator of a platform called '*African Conversations with Self*' (ACwS) that is collecting a video anthology of lived experiences of post-colonial Africa. I believe in the power of conversations and the power of lived experiences. Only by walking in the path of another can one begin to understand

the road one has trod and the hurdles one has overcome. That voice in your head is your strongest critic and the only way to stay alive and thrive when living with a chronic illness is to practice ABC - Attend to Your Basic Needs with Compassion. In all you do exercise compassion. I hope the stories in this book are as impactful for you as they were for me.

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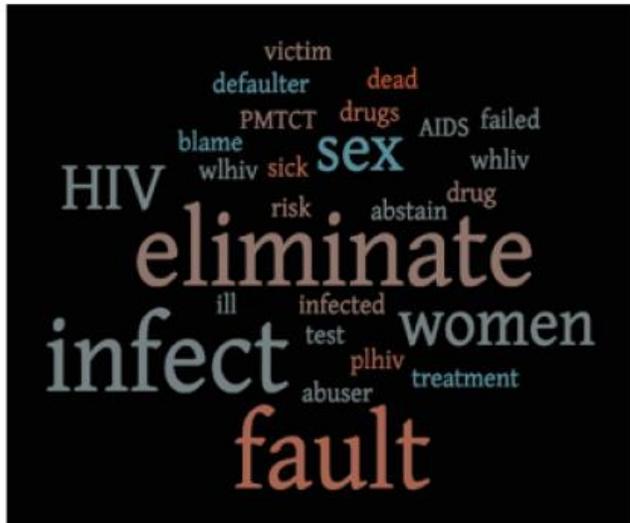
The project could not have been possible without the help of many. Please see their bios at the end of this book.

I would like to make a special mention of the artist Silas Motse. He created this image for the book. When people first saw it, it elicited some very different and extreme reactions. Some said it expressed how they felt as people infected and affected by HIV. You will see from their stories why the picture resonates. Others said it repelled them and did not show the progress and hope through antiretroviral therapy and treatment and the ability to live longer lives.

## Language Matters

The use of language is extremely important and I could not say it better than this note from the Salamander Trust <https://salamandertrust.net/project/the-power-of-language/>

*The language we choose to use – about the issues we address every day*



It shapes the way we feel, think, act and react. It also has a physiological effect on our bodies which, in turn has an effect on all our vital organs.

Take a look at the two boxes on the left. Say the words in the left box out loud for 30 seconds. Then say the words in the right box out loud for 30 seconds. What difference can you feel?

Here we offer a small dip into the vast sociological, psychological and philosophical body of literature about how language has shaped, and continues to shape our lives, around the world and across the centuries. An increasing number of HIV organisations, academics and health service providers are growing to recognise the effects that the language they use can have on what works – or doesn't – in an effective and ethical response to HIV and AIDS.

All of the programmes of work in which we are involved use language which is positive, affirming, solution-focused, forward- thinking and which builds on the active agency of those involved.

This has been reflected in, for example, the WHO (2017) [Guideline](#) on the SRHR of women living with HIV. This states:

*“Acknowledge the importance of language: Positive, inclusive language creates new opportunities for advancement and collaboration, instead of exclusively focusing on ending existing problems. For example, discussing “promoting health” instead of “ending disease” can create opportunities to think about the next steps in health promotion, in addition to responding to concerns of ill health. SRHR programmes should use language that puts people ahead of*

*disease, such as saying “people living with HIV” instead of “HIV-infected people” or “HIV-positive people”. HIV or AIDS should be used instead of HIV/AIDS, thereby disassociating the virus and the clinical syndrome. “Acquire” is a more neutral term than “infected” when referring to the transmission of HIV. Comprehensive prevention of “vertical transmission” can be used instead of saying “mother-to-child transmission” (or MTCT), to reduce possible blame that women living with HIV may experience. This is central to creating an environment that promotes SRHR.” (page 19-20)*

It is also reflected in the ALIV[H]E Framework which is available on the [UNAIDS](#) website.

*“Why do we use the term ‘safety’ instead of ‘stigma and discrimination’? If we look at the other headings in this section we will see that they are framed as either positive or neutral. Stigma and discrimination, by contrast, are negative issues. We seek not just an end to stigma and discrimination, but also to replace them with something positive – described in this document as ‘safety’. Conventional research methods traditionally start with a problem statement, but recent neuropsychological research suggests that we are more creative and productive thinkers when we focus on solutions – not on ‘what is our problem?’ but rather, ‘what is already working well in our lives? How can we build on our strengths to take this further? Where would we like to be and how can we reach this future place?” (extract from Box 3, page 14)*

In this book we are using the language that has shaped the authors’ journeys. The language is in the original voices and it helps understand how stigma developed. As we enter this journey please remember that these stories are the lived experiences of people who have walked a very difficult path. We celebrate the recognition of the importance of language to reduce stigma and hope that everyone reading this book remembers to adopt the terms in the box on the right.

## Such is Life, More than HIV by Gcebile Ndlovu

In the early eighties I understood HIV to be something distant and removed from me. It hit home in 1989 when my husband was applying for an insurance policy which required an HIV test to be taken. I never gave it much thought until the results came back and the policy was declined. In denial, I pretended I had heard nothing. I was not responsible enough and did not have the courage to test for HIV after learning of my husband's positive status. Five years later I gave birth to a bouncing baby boy which was evidence that I engaged in unprotected sex, denial at its worst despite all the knowledge I had about HIV. I breastfed for two years.

When my husband's health started deteriorating, I had to come to terms with reality, HIV was in my family. It is a subject we never discussed as a family but I was free to talk about it at work as something affecting others, not me, yet I knew it was my reality deep down within me. It was only after my husband's passing on that I felt the urge to talk about it and how it was affecting me. I was left alone and first and foremost I took the test, it was positive. I felt like I should liberate myself from anger and always thinking people are gossiping about me. I felt like I should let an open secret out. I explained to my family first the



reason I wanted to be open about my status - my father understood. I told my parents first as my boys and I had left our home in the city to stay with them. That is a decision I had to make soon after the burial of my beloved husband. Alone, I could not afford living in the city, maintaining our home and keeping my two boys at a school in neighboring South Africa. On his death bed my husband asked how I was going to keep the boys in the school in South Africa. He wondered if I was going to recall them and I promised him that I would do all in my power for them to finish school in South Africa and this gave him peace. So my decision to go back home was in the best interest of my boys and keeping the promise to the love of my life. The people who mattered to me and cared about me supported my decision and I did not care what other people thought, I did not owe anyone else any explanation. I was prepared to sleep in the kitchen if need be, and one thing I knew is that we would never sleep hungry and my boys would continue school undisturbed because I was struggling to make ends meet with one income. I may not have acknowledged God then but He has kept us throughout, His grace, His providence is amazing. The two older boys were next on my list to be told of my status. It was during one of the holidays they were home. I sat them down and told them. I don't know what was going on in their minds. One asked if their little brother was also positive and I told them I did not know. I had asked my doctor about testing the baby and he advised against it. He said he would test him only if he were sick.

As is customary I wore mourning clothes for about three months. During this time eSwatini was marking thirty years of independence and His Majesty the King was celebrating his thirtieth birthday, and it was decreed not to wear mourning clothes. Had it not been the country's thirtieth celebrations I would have worn them for a year. I went through the ceremony of removing them at my husband's village. One family member from my in-laws' side could not hide his anger at why I was taking off the mourning clothes before the expected/stipulated time according to our culture. It was as if he had not heard the national

announcement. I wondered how he benefitted from me being oppressed by the mourning gowns. While clothed in mourning gowns there are places you are not allowed to go. In a community meeting you are expected to sit at the back and only speak through someone, you are treated more like an outcast than a normal human being. Who in their right senses would not be happy that the mourning period was shortened? I wore them out of respect not because they meant anything to me. How I felt, and still feel about my husband's passing on is in my heart and is known by me alone. The humiliation I experienced with the mourning gowns prolonged the pain of the grieving process. It was during this time that I got to watch the Zimbabwean film, Neria. Even though my in-laws did not take away anything from me, I identified with Neria whose husband died after being hit by a motor vehicle while riding a bike from work.

I had a huge task telling my colleagues, at which time I was leading a team taking care of the terminally ill in the comfort of their homes surrounded by loved ones. I say it was a huge task because even though some



of those we were taking care of were dying of AIDS, one would hear jokes about AIDS. Someone amongst us would be having a cough and you would hear something like "Move away from me with your AIDS" jokingly. Here I was, with the real HIV, not coughing or sick. I had to be bold and address my colleagues one by one. It was not a very big team, less than ten members. I asked that we stop joking about AIDS because it would hurt those we are caring for to know that we joke about their conditions. I then broke the news that I am HIV positive. At first none believed me, but with time they did. I also told my friends about my status. Revealing my status was to prepare everyone close to me that they would soon hear about my HIV positive status on national media. There was a conference where I was one of the speakers. My first sentence after observing all protocol was, "I am one of thousands of women living with HIV." The room went quiet and you could hear a pin drop. The then minister of health and social welfare, Dr. P.K. Dlamini was in tears. I do not think they heard the rest of what I said that evening. For me to be known nationwide that I am living with HIV was and still is liberating in the sense that it is out there, there is no need for people to suspect and start wondering how they will approach me. The following days, weeks and months, I had messages commending me for sharing with emaSwati my positive HIV status. Even with doctors, we start consultation for any other condition having mentioned that I am living with HIV.

My speaking openly of my HIV status was all over the media, making me the first professional to speak openly about being HIV positive. Some commented that that I was lying and had been paid to speak about my positive status. Because I was physically well and fit, people could not equate my status and healthy outlook as I did not fit the sick, emaciated, stereotype many associated with HIV. A lot of people did not know the difference between HIV and AIDS. Much was said but up to today I do not regret having taken that step. My positive outlook to life keeps me going and has helped many come to terms with their own HIV positive status. I am walking with many who have only disclosed their statuses to me, I am their support and they are my support.

A few weeks after speaking openly, my in-laws sent a two-man delegation to my father to expressed my in-laws' displeasure towards my talking about my positive status. They told my father to stop me from disclosing my status as it was not good for my husband's name. My father responded by telling them I was

an adult who made her own decisions, I felt sorry for them as I had no intention of stopping my disclosure of my status. In all my disclosures I never once mentioned my husband - it was all about me and for that reason I ignored what the delegation conveyed to my father, not out of disrespect, but so I could stay true to what I believed in. I was on a mission to be part of the HIV response in the kingdom and in those days the kingdom had the highest prevalence in the whole world. Thinking about it now, my in-laws were in denial, pretending HIV did not exist yet people were sick left right and centre. It could be that they were angry and blaming me for my husband's death as it is the case in many African cultures. The wife or female partner is always blamed for the male partner's or husband's death. I feel sorry for all those around me who blamed me when I spoke openly about my status because they have seen the effects of HIV very close to them. When it hits home there is no more room for denial but to seek support from all around you. I wonder if when that time comes you think of how you have viewed or treated HIV positive people. It is in such situations that the Bible verse that says, "Do unto others as you would like done to you" should ring a bell.

I thought speaking openly would also save me from gossip, little did I know that some people still found pleasure in pointing fingers at me. One day at a department store in Manzini two girls in their teens were clearly talking about me. I stared at them and they sheepishly moved out of the store. People like that presented an opportunity to educate them and dispel the misinformation and ignorance they believed about HIV and AIDS.

An opportunity to travel to the United States of America for the first time arose and I got the shock of my life as the visa application form had a section which asked about one's HIV or AIDS status. There was no way I could lie about my status and I was not sure if I would be granted a three months visa while all others were given ten years. I was asked to bring a letter from my doctor to say something like I was fit to travel and I would not fall sick during my trip abroad. My doctor was not happy with what was asked of him but wrote the letter for me anyway. I was granted the visa with some waiver. When I got JFK international airport the airport officer looked at my passport and asked me to step aside. I just stood calm and about ten minutes later he handed me my passport and told me to proceed. For all other subsequent trips to the United States of America, I was never asked to step aside, I proceeded in the queue like all the other travelers. It made me wonder just how many people lied about HIV on the visa form. At times one suffers for being honest.

When my son was eleven we had an opportunity to visit the USA. So we applied for visas and were called for an interview. The officer went through my form and asked if I was HIV positive and I said yes. All was well and she gave us our passports and we left. When we were outside my son asked if I was positive and I felt a lump in my throat and I said yes, he said ok. At that point I did not know what more I could say as it dawned on me that I had never addressed the HIV issue with him and a lot went through my mind. Maybe my son had been ridiculed at school because his mother is HIV positive, I did not know because I never discussed it with him, and felt like an irresponsible mother.

In December 2011 I was diagnosed with a fungal infection in the brain which left me hemiplegic. The meningitis was bad and the doctor said chances of full recovery were fifty/fifty. I stayed in hospital for two weeks and was discharged on Christmas Eve. It was such a joy to be home with family and friends at Christmas. For the first time in my life I struggled with my appetite. It was a mission to swallow a spoonful of porridge. I would crave certain food only to find that when brought to me I would not be able to eat it. I had diarrhea for more than a month and I had lost weight remarkably such that people would pass me by without recognizing me. When I went to the doctor for review my blood tests showed that the virus was not responding to treatment. The doctor said I was not taking my medication, my CD 4 was 3 while the viral load was above six million copies. I told the doctor I was taking the ARVs as directed. It was then that I was switched to second line. I slowly regained my normal weight. Actually, as my appetite improved, my

younger sister joked saying I should be mindful of how much I eat as it would be difficult to help me sit up. My right side was affected and I am right handed. I have since learnt to use my left hand but writing is still a problem, thank God for computers.

In the second year of recovering I contracted glandular tuberculosis (TB). I enrolled for TB treatment and was on it for nine months after which I was completely cured. There is nothing nice about taking a handful of tablets but I endured as it was and still is about my being well and healthy.

Three years after the bout of meningitis, I felt I needed to be out there and do something. I approached a few acquaintances and told them I was tired of sitting at home, could they please find me something to do. I was not lucky on that front which was depressing as it made me feel useless. The following year I approached a national magazine I used to write for monthly about HIV and AIDS. I asked if I could contribute again about health issues not just about AIDS. They accepted my offer. While it is a monthly thing, it keeps me sane. Around August 2017, some individuals asked if I was interested in working in the environment space. I said yes, and was willing to learn. Since then I have been with a non-governmental organization that seeks to instill good environmental practices amongst the youth. It is therapeutic as well as challenging. I will soon be retiring soon as I will reach retirement age in a few weeks.

I am blessed with three sons, my family, friends and work colleagues. Despite my HIV positive status, they lovingly support me all the way, it is God's GRACE!



## Gcebile Ndlovu Bio



Gcebile Ndlovu, a graduate of the then Swaziland Institute of Health Sciences, holds a Diploma in General Nursing, Diploma in Midwifery and Diploma in Public Health from Morogoro Public Health Nursing School, Tanzania. She worked for the Government of eSwatini for eleven years as a public health nurse. She then left the public sector to work for Swaziland Hospice at Home, leading a team of nurses in palliative care. After seven years with Hospice at Home, she then joined the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) as a National Programme Officer working with groups of people living with HIV and AIDS and the We Care programme within the United Nations. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Swaziland Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (SWANEPHA). She worked for the United

Nations for three years then moved on to work for the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (ICW). ICW is a global network of which Gcebile established the Southern Africa Regional Office.

Based on the experience she gained while working, she conducted an evaluation of Home Based Care Programme and Youth Friendly Services commissioned by the Ministry of Health through the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

Her main interest is in women's rights and women's health issues.

She is presently involved with Nguwe Likusasa Letfu, an NGO that seeks to raise awareness and educate young people on environmental issues.

## **Sunrise after a Dark Night by Catherine Murombedzi**

Indeed, it was a dark night. I could hear any slight movement outside, a dog barking in the community miles away. Dogs always bark, it's irrelevant, why were barking dogs important on that specific night? I could hear a car drive by in the main road a mile off. I could hear a roach fall off the kitchen shelf three rooms away.

I could hear my own breathing, counting the heavens.

Tossing and turning, the various messages that got my mobile flashing were nauseating.

All, yes everything, that took place became alive, playing in my mind in that dark night.

I became aware of my purpose in life.

If only my baby would be OK.

If only God answered this clean and honest prayer of a believing mother. My faith walk gained foundation, it is from this November 2008 Thursday night that I became a new creation. New in thinking, doing, deeds.

I am here today because of that oath I took to myself.

I am a purpose being.

Thirteen years now, my healthy girl now thirteen.

She talks of being a teen as if she is the first and only one to have been a teenager. I am silently happy of that.

Thanks to that single dose nevirapine tablet which became a part of my life 14 years ago.

I have taken lots of tablets in my life, I, continue to take life long medications. From ART, hypertension pills, diabetes mellitus stabilisation tablets. Pills have been part of my life after that very important small pill. Am not sure if my HIV+status led to the other two life conditions, or the two, not withstanding my status, would still have hit my body?

With the HIV+ diagnosis during pregnancy, I prayed for my baby to be HIV-free.

To an HIV-free generation, it is possible. That single dose did it for my baby and I.

Today's advanced antiretroviral therapy, viral suppression, enough knowledge, support for peers and an informed medical fraternity, it is possible to be All I Can.

With science at work, the prevention tool basket choice keeps growing. How soon will funding in my country ring fence the virus right at entry point? The ring was approved by Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ), however, the national pocket does not allow. I am talking of the dapivirine ring, the discreet insertion ring that destroys the HIV virus at the point of entry in the vagina.

Giving power to women and girls to prevent HIV infection is a pillar to ending Aids. Mind you, females bear the brunt of HIV infections, the HIV virus has the face of a woman.

Recent science success is the injectable, cabotegravir, a pre exposure prophylaxis, PrEP, will be a bullet to the HIV virus. The jab also brings choice lessening the pill burden.

Oh, I have seen the sun rise after the dark night I pondered the future in the dark, in bed, asleep but wide awake.

Oh, I am willing to take part in HIV Cure trials.

Someone took the ART trials that have ushered me a new lease of life. Those were my s/heroes.

To the sunrise of an HIV Cure.

I pray again that this takes place in my lifetime.

It is, indeed, sunrise after a dark night.

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## **The Journey So Far - The End Not Yet by Anne John**

I was 6 years old when my mom took my sister and me to the hospital, because my younger brother had just died. My brother died in the year 2003, 3months after being born. I was placed on medications and oh my God, I hated them, especially when the liquid had to be injected into my mouth. Most times I vomited, but my mom made me take another dose. Gradually it became pills and not liquid. When I was in junior high class three, I had to ask my mom if I was sick and why I had to take the drugs morning and night compulsory. Then she told me I had HIV, we were still dealing with the fact that my father left, even though he always complained that he didn't want a first child to be a girl and he expected a boy, so he literally didn't like that I came as a girl. He left knowing he was positive and he had destroyed my life and my mom's. My sister was lucky, that's what I had always told myself, but she has always been supportive ever she knew, I think because of my health we became closer and best friends.

My dad left 2005 after he returned from Saudi Arabia. It was quite difficult at first, because we almost lost my mom. It was as if her world ended during that period. We couldn't cope at that moment, because he was supporting the family before he left, but the moment he chose to leave, he said we weren't his family. So we had to move to another city where my maternal grandmother and my Mom's siblings stay.

It wasn't a good time there, because they knew about my Mom's status, and treated my Mom and me so differently. It was really difficult for me to really adjust. It became hard to continue my friendship with my friends, whenever we had the health education class, the teachers made it look like people with HIV are condemned to death and people shouldn't be around them, so I knew that if anyone got to know, they wouldn't be friends any longer, so I developed the habit of leaving people before they even had the chance to get to know me. I didn't disclose my status because of the reaction of my peers during the health education classes. By this time I was in junior high class 3 in 2010, I knew my status and I stopped having close friends. If only the teachers didn't make it scary and humiliating. Proper information should be taught in schools, to avoid stigmatization and discrimination. Because there were times they would throw a joke around saying, when someone becomes lean after a short sickness, they have HIV. Somehow I felt it was directed to me, because I always lose a little weight after recovering from a sickness.

My mother left my younger sister and me with my uncle after leaving her mother's place because of the ill-treatment we got. But my uncle didn't want her staying, and he only agreed to keep us (the children), only if my Mom could provide for our basic upkeep – food, school fees and the basic needs for young girls. She was staying 3 streets away, and we could always visit her for weekends. We stayed in this situation for 4yrs. We had a rough life, my mom family treated us bad because of our status. I got pneumonia one time when I was 9 years old and it felt as if I was going to die, but my mom wouldn't allow that. I went through silent stigma from my uncle because my mom left us with him to stabilise herself before she could get us back.

My mom always took me to the clinic, on my scheduled dates. I had my meds and she always called when it was time to take my meds, which was at 7am and 7pm. The medications were free from the start and very much accessible. I fell sick a few times, during her absence. My uncle always informed her, and she would come and take me to the hospital. The medication is easier to take now since it's just once a day, I take them in the morning by 7am. The time I wake, very easy for me.

We moved back to live with her when I was writing my final exams in senior high school. I literally just had my sister as a friend, because then, no teenager of my age would want to be friends with me. When I got to the polytechnic, I thought I could be more social, I told my first boyfriend about my status and he just left without saying anything (ghosted). I got into the polytechnic in the year 2017 and studied science laboratory technology. Graduating wasn't easy, but I did it anyway. My first lab job in a hospital was as an IT student in a lab that was owned by the church I attend. The vice management, from out of the blue instructed the head scientist not to allow me to take blood samples anymore without any good reason. This was because, the church offered my mom a job at the school, and a few of the priests got to know about our status. I fell into depression for years, imagine even at work they wouldn't let take blood samples because of my status. It made everything worse.

But my experience with other organizations was pleasant, especially with FHI360, they gave me the chance to explore myself in the world of counselling. I started counselling in my clinic, I met a lot of vibrant youths like myself, they inspired me. And one time I attended a camp, in which I made up my mind that I wanted to be an advocate. Ever since then I have always been my own counsellor, because I sometimes slip in depression. And I'm trying to do fine for myself and my family, and I'm 25yrs old and back to school to finally graduate and move on. I'm blessed to have my mom and sister. I'm trying to get a job to sustain myself to finish my studies, because my mom can't afford to pay for both myself and younger sister, she is in the university.

My family keeps me going, both my mom and sister have been really helpful. I fall in and out of depression.

### **Anne John Bio**



Anne is 25 years old and is studying microbiology at the polytechnic. She lives in Nigeria

## **Shattered but Beautiful by Patience Dauda Iyakwo**

Good morning ma'am, I have dropping my story this morning without withholding anything back.

I am Patience Dauda Iyakwo an only girl child amidst 6 boys. I was born on 26/09/1978 to Mr and Mrs Esther Dauda in Ikorodu in the city of Lagos. Life was so beautiful until I lost my mum in a ghastly motor accident on 31st May 1992 in the city of Jos Nigeria

My dad had to resign from the Nigerian army to focus on taking care of us in my village in Kogi state Nigeria

I was only in senior secondary school grade 2 when we came to the village and I was doing very well at school until in 1995 I became pregnant from my very first attempt of having sex and that happened while in grade 5 and already the head girl of my school.

Life crumbled for me again as my dad was disappointed in me and vowed not to have anything to do with me because he expected more from me as his only daughter among 6 boys. He actually wanted me to become a nurse but unfortunately here I was pregnant and the father of the child had denied ever having anything to do with me

I had the baby on 8th June 1996 and it was a girl, I cherish her but life was hard for me so I couldn't give her my best. I was determined to go back and complete my senior secondary school but my father wouldn't help and my brothers were all still battling to finish up school too so no one could actually help me so I resorted to buying cassava from farms so I could make garri (the creamy granular flour obtained by processing the starchy tuberous roots of freshly harvested cassava). It wasn't easy but I knew I was not where I ought to be so I persisted. I would dig the cassava by myself, pack it on my head and peel, wash and grind it. I would then set it on the "jack" then I would fry it and take it to the market to sell. I also started selling black market fuel so with the profit from these sales I enrolled myself back in school and my entire village stood still for that singular decision I took as it was a first time to see a single mom going back to school even though some never believed I ever go back.

I finally finished school and because of the mistreatment by my step mom I moved to Abuja Nigeria's Federal Capital to find a means of living and took my daughter with me. I sold everything saleable to feed my daughter and I. I also had a few relationships which I thought would lead to marriage but they all failed so I continued life until I met my ex everything was fine and I got pregnant for him and which made him go see my parents although dowry or bride price was not collected from him as a custom. I lost that pregnancy and in 2006 we both decided to go do HIV test because of the constant awareness. We went and I was positive while he was negative, I was told by the counsellor that it was my choice to disclose my status to him or not, but I told them I would disclose to him immediately because the relationship had not gone far so we can all go out parts and thanks to God I lost the previous pregnancy so there's no child between us. So I told him and to my surprise he said he can't let me go that we would continue the relationship. Unknown to me this would become my worst nightmare in time to come. We continued and had 2 children but every plea for my ex to go and conclude my marriage rites didn't yield any fruit. In 2010 I completed 10 years as a person living with HIV and I decided to write a book eulogizing my ex for standing by me in my trying times. I was unaware of the great havoc he was carrying out. I was pregnant with our 3rd child before I got to know that my ex was molesting and having sexual intercourse with my daughter which was his step daughter. I nearly died from the betrayal and disappointment when I asked him and he didn't deny it. I had to immediately relocate with my children since I was already working with the

Nigerian Police force I sought for transfer and left devastated at that. His family and the church pleaded and I returned back to the relationship again, but this time I wasn't happy knowing that I was coming to live under same roof with my daughter and the man who molested her from age 11 to 16. Each time after having sex with him. I will turn around and cry because I couldn't explain why I should still be sleeping with a man that has done so much evil to my daughter but I stayed and what I used to console myself was that I was staying with my children as I now have 2 boys and 1 girl for him. He hurriedly made arrangements for a legal marriage in court which I foolishly consented to without really understanding the effect

Tragedy struck again when I found out that my next door neighbour and same choir member from same church was pregnant for my ex, I almost died of depression and had to see a counsellor for my sanity sake. I was gradually dying inside of me, my daughter was also not doing well because she felt betrayed on my part too for coming back to her molester and all these combined to cause me grief and sleeplessness so I had to act and as fast as possible.

On the 15th March 2019 I had to relocate with my kids and start living a new life though not easy but I have peace within knowing that my daughter is happy because I am no longer with her molester. My 4 children (my daughter and his 3 children) and I have been together since then and life goes on either if he sends money for up keep or not. On the 17th March 2022 he brought a court order which summoned me to appear in court for divorce, but he is claiming the house I built and wants to take the children from me by asking the court to allow the children to visit him. On the 9th of April 2022 I appeared in court and the first thing he would tell the court was that I was HIV positive in the open court! Oh my God! I felt bad and the judge have to stop him from talking. The case is still on and my next appearance in court is 20th September 2022.

As a woman living with HIV I have given my own quota in fighting stigma and discrimination. I granted interview for a documentary to Nigeria Television Authority NTA. 2011 World aids day I spoke on PMTCT at the American Embassy through USAID. I have a women group support group which I have single handedly nurtured but not active right now

I tell this story to liberate women who might be going through same and I'm willing to stand anywhere and tell this story so long it gives healing to my fellow women

I covet your prayers, it hasn't been easy but God has been faithful to us and we expect victory as we go to court on the 20th September 2022

Lots of love

From Patience Dauda Iyakwo

## Patience Dauda Iyakwo Bio



and a girl). I love to see girls empowered with diverse skills and growing into a secured future with genuine love. I love traveling, talking, reading, writing and cooking.

I am Patience Dauda Iyakwo, 44 years old and an inspector with the Nigerian Police force with a burning passion for the girl child. I am the founder and convener Girls for Christ foundation and gifted support group for women living with HIV and AIDS. I am a soft furnishing tutor with specialty on all shades of throw pillows. I attended command day secondary school Jos Plateau state, then Community secondary school Gegu-Beki Kogi state. I attended University of Abuja where I obtained a degree in guidance and counseling. I am a peer educator trained by institute for human virology Abuja Nigeria. An advocate for sexual and reproductive health right and a volunteer for UNDP AND SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE PROJECT TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. I am a mother of 4 ( 2 boys 2 girls) and a grandmother of 2 (A boy

## **HIV can happen to anyone by Alberto Jose Perez Bermudez**

My name is Alberto Perez Bermudez, I am honoured to be involved in the writing of this script, which is going to touch lives across the globe.

I am a man aged 52 and have been living positively with the HIV for virus for more than thirty-four (34) years. I am married to Jacqueline Souza Perez. I would like to thank her for managing to love me through my bad habits and street gangster character. Had it not been for her I don't know what my demise would have been, probably I would have died a long time ago and this story could have been written by my wife. My Dad, Alberto Perez Solorzano Snr and my Mother Ernestina Lorena Bermudez were also very supportive and I really appreciate their efforts.

I come from a big family of seven. My brothers, Jose Antonio Bermudez and Manuel Enrique Bermudez and my sisters Maria Fabiola Bermudez, Anayamsie Perez Aburto and Maria Fabiola Perez Aburto complete the puzzle of love that saw me remain alive today. They stood by me through thick and thin. I also want to thank my grandmother; Ernestina Bermudez Hernandez and my grandfather Manuel Bermudez.

When Wadzanai Garwe persuaded me to write my story I was a bit skeptical. But after a chat with her I became very excited about the whole ordeal especially that we would be writing my personal HIV true life story book.

My wife is from Montevideo, in Uruguay.

Like I mentioned earlier she was the one who assisted me to leave the streets where I was a feared gang leader. I was a street kid, yet my Grandmother inspired me to finish school. She gave me a lot of zeal to prove to her that I can make her proud, and I did just that although I was faced with so many challenges. Peer pressure was the main culprit. I thank God for helping me fulfill my promise to Grandma. I vowed not to disappoint my grandmother and my Almighty God. I also owe it to my best friend Arthur Silverstein, he was a pillar of strength, whenever the chips were down, and I salute him. I keep wanting to thank my wife as she never stopped me from associating with Arthur. Most couples clash when the choice of friends is at stake.

Somehow I thank policy makers as their HIV and immigration laws helped in a way to sustain me. Furthermore, what shapes a human being is his religion, beliefs, norms and values. I'm Catholic and I strongly believe in God and this has in many ways assisted me to pull through difficult times.

Yes at first it was very difficult to accept my HIV status, but as soon as I accepted that it is what it is, I started pushing the wagons of life in a more positive way. To continue to live positively has a great impact on other people around you especially the affected and afflicted. I took it upon myself to stand firm so that I could inspire and help out other HIV positive individuals like me. I came to realise and would like the whole world to know that we are all potential victims of HIV/AIDS. No one is immune to contracting the virus, but it is up to society to spread useful information far and wide, so as to protect the young generation mostly. This is so that we can have an HIV free generation in years to come. Although the use of condoms is not full proof in preventing infections people need more sensitisation on the use of them. Abstinence is best but with hormones firing inside young bodies it's a challenging feat to achieve or adhere to.

We moved to US in the 80s. We left Nicaragua because my family didn't want me to join the army as it was mandatory for people my age to be recruited into the army. On my father's side I have 2 sisters and from my mother's side I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. My childhood was pretty good I had everything that I wanted. I have cousins and an uncle as my other relatives. I did my high school education at Miami Jackson Senior School, as from the 9th to 12th grade. I loved being in high school as it gave me an opportunity to meet people and make friends. I learnt Italian as a second language. I had done my Elementary schooling from grade 4 to grade 7, at Bugatti Washington Junior School.

As a teenager I went into the streets and I lived there for more than three years. It was tough and very difficult for me. It's a phase I would rather not talk about as it has many bad memories. One thing I cherish in spite of all my ups and downs in life is that I kept the vow I had made to my grandma, though she is now late. I had promised her that I would complete my high school studies, and I did just that.

I went to a local Miami clinic to find out my blood specimen status after slowly learning about the HIV/AIDS scourge. They examined my blood and it came out positive for HIV. I was only 18 years old. I had met and slept with hordes of girls in the streets (I was one of the gang leaders) through my gang and I never used protection neither had I had a reason to. I never knew that I would get infected I thought it only happened to gay people. That myth was widely shared amongst many in the streets of America. I had no clue what HIV was when I tested positive. I immediately started to dig for more information about HIV/AIDS and that changed my life for the good.

I had a blessed childhood which was wholesome, because I grew up in a good family environment. My Dad was a professional and my mother was a housewife. I was in my country of birth for 10 years before we moved to the United States of America.

I went into the streets due to my rebellious behaviour towards my stepfather who was living with my mother at that time. I didn't want to follow his rules. I experienced street life for several years and by the grace of God I came out of it in one piece.

Usually people on the streets are associated with low lives, poverty stricken kids, orphaned children and the likes. Yet I had a good life so much that I even had the privilege of attending a private school, where I enjoyed playing basketball and table tennis (ping pong). Unfortunately, my father disappeared for years, when I was young. So my parents ended up drifting apart and it ended in a divorce. Their divorce subsequently meant that I would end up being raised by my Grandma. She was a woman of virtue and she is the one who taught me every good thing that I know. She was very loving and caring. Her personality and character made me want to keep my promises to her, to remain sober and away from drugs as well as completing my high school diploma.

My father's behaviour somehow contributed to my rebellion. As my mother was still young, she decided to move on with her life hence she ended up re-marrying my step father whom I despised a lot. I never got to like him, I guess because deep down I felt that he was not my real father and hated him for trying to replace my biological father. At the same time, I was bitter because my father had abandoned us. The whole scenario was so traumatizing and too much for my young mind to deal with. This led to my decision to run away from home and be independent in the streets. The more I stayed at home with all the strict rules applied by my stepfather the more I loathed my parents' divorce and the more I felt compelled to just escape into the harsh world. Although my stepfather was a pain in the butt, as a child I was supposed to just live with it in a family setting. The streets have claimed so many young lives - I was just a lucky man to come out of the streets alive.

I was fourteen when I gathered the guts to leave home. It was a stupid decision driven by stubbornness and the raging puberty hormones. Being a young upcoming bull made me feel like I could really make it out there. In my young opinion, the violent streets were better for me than having to put up with all those rules set up by my stepfather. Had I known it would land me in deep trouble with the HIV virus I would have stayed at home and focused on being a good stepson. Nonetheless life goes on, God sometimes makes us go through such journeys in life to help others learn good ways of living. I am now a case study, and my life experience testimony will touch lives in many ways far and wide.

I stayed in the street for 4 years. It was very tough. It was the worst period in my life. I didn't have a roof over my head, neither did I have any decent food at first or anywhere to sleep. I and my gang members used to have a name, we called ourselves, Latino's Force. The type of gang was made up of at least fifty people to almost a hundred. We would roam the streets and be each other's company as a big street family. We did all sorts, those who could were on drugs and casual sex was like a culture, almost all of the gang members were on drugs and risky behaviour. This included crime. I was smart enough to dodge being involved in serious crime. I never got busted or arrested, but some members were thrown in jail once they got caught.

For instance, we used to have a lot of casual sex and we did it blindly without any education on HIV of sexual reproductive health rights. We used to have unprotected sex with many of the female street gangsters. What exposed me most to the virus is the fact that I was a gang leader and this came with many privileges. If for instance a female wanted to join our gang she would come through me and part of the initiation involved having sexual intercourse, unprotected sex. So if you can comprehend how many ladies



were in the group of hundred and most if not all would have passed through my vetting which meant sexual intercourse interviews. More girls from high schools also became my conquests. This crude behaviour put me at high risk of HIV infection hence to this day I do not even know who infected me. I was ignorant to HIV/AIDS ways of infection. I regret never using condoms. Nobody had ever told me about sexual reproductive health.

I slept with so many girls from different high schools who I met and ladies I met in the street. I also had these other ladies like Gracey who used to fund material possessions for me in exchange for sex. So I slept with a whole bunch of them. Also take note that I was sexually active since I was thirteen years old. To make matters worse, I was doing it all wrong. I found out back in 1988 that I was HIV positive. I started educating myself more on the Pandemic. I went to a lot of support groups to be where I am now. I attended many HIV related workshops where I learnt a lot about HIV and my ignorant notion that HIV was only for gays and lesbians was dispelled. Years later this saw me to conducting a lot of HIV advocacy work.

I didn't go to college as I got married to help my wife who was an illegal immigrant. I did everything out of love, and we are still together 18yrs later. By the way I met my wife through an HIV positive heterosexual group, and we fell in love. Ever since I met her, she has been very loving and supportive, and we are living positively as a happy family. She put a stop to my gangsterism character you know. I really appreciate my wife's role in my HIV positive living era.

Now I am a good person and a respectable member of the community. I am a hard worker; I am an HIV activist and I do a lot of activities for HIV programs at the local level and a lot of other things. I now inspire other people especially those who have recently been diagnosed with the virus. I am also a devout Christian, in my personal life I now do everything right by God standards

I made an about-turn ever since I discovered I was HIV positive. This can be attributed to God Almighty mostly and the family support as well as my circle of friends. I am forever grateful. I decided to start working and I have worked at Hotel Fantam Blue, and I worked there for about 11 years.

I was fortunate enough as I managed to keep the promise I had made to my Grandma that I would stay sober and off drugs, it was not easy as there was a lot of peer pressure. I managed however to remain clean, until I got off the streets, thanks to my good friend who helped me out and I finished high school in 1991. I am forever grateful to God for looking after me on the rough streets.

One aspect of the rebellious season of my life cannot go by unmentioned. It is the role played by my good friend Arthur. He took me in to his humble home and away from all the street hassles, trials and tribulations. Had it not been for him I could be dead and an AIDS statistic by now.

He became my pillar of strength, a father figure in my life. He stood firm in guiding, counselling, and mentoring me, including being my guardian angel. There were other people who helped me but my best friend Arthur stood out above the rest and this is why our friendship has remained resolute for more than 34 years now. Growing up without a father was not easy, but Arthur made it all the better by being there for me. I can safely say he was God sent. In fact, I owe him my life because he taught me how to dress, how to behave, how to respect people no matter where they come from, how to stay away from drugs, how to stay alive, how to stay away from crime. He even taught me how to listen to the right music. Most of all he helped me come out of gangsterism. Because of his guidance I also started to view life with a purpose and instilled in me a desire to be a person who lived well, complete well-being. Today, here I am, a proud Dad to two beautiful kids who I love and cherish immensely. I am a respectable gentleman now married to my beautiful wife and very much in love. I am faithful to my wife. I have been faithful for 18yrs now. Our marriage is blissful.

For the past three years I have been doing a lot of HIV education especially on prevention on social media like Facebook, Instagram, and tiktok under my name.

My wife is also HIV positive but she is discreet about it. She is not as open as myself, but she does take her medication and live positively. We love each other and have always and will continue being there for each other. I told her I am determined to control HIV as much as possible, no matter what.

I believe God has always wanted me to continue doing what I am doing.

When I applied for my wife's citizenship it was the happiest day of our lives as she became a legal citizen. Now many young people look up to me as a role model. I am glad that I am inspiring many of them such that they are not going to find themselves among the statistics of those living on the streets. I pray that God keeps guiding me on this journey of fighting for an HIV free generation..

## **Alberto Jose Perez Bermudez Bio**



Alberto is an AIDS Activist, Educator for People with Aids in the Hispanic Community, a long term HIV survivor and Group leader. He is a Hispanic catholic heterosexual young man who acts as a group leader for various organizations, both locally and nationally in the effort of educating others. Alberto looks for all types of HIV/AIDS newsletters and distributes it to various organizations in my community. He is am trying to get medication for the AIDS community in third world countries.

## Through the Rough Streets an Orphan Survived by Ras Silas Motse

Hello Wadzi!

I hope you are good and I hope you are doing great. I am sending you love, you know that I love you so much with all my heart. Thank you for giving me this platform. Thank you for initiating this platform. I do not know what to say, I am just having butterflies in my chest and my stomach. Yah! So regarding my story, regarding HIV and AIDS. We all know, I am sure you are getting HIV positive persons, but for me, I am not HIV positive. However, it has affected my life, it has changed me, and it has hurt me so much. I am originally from the Freestate, Thaba Nchu. A small location called Motlatla (Sekotimpate). That is where I grew up. I grew up in a very small family. Mr. Mosiwa Jonnanes Motse and Mrs. Matshidiso Julies Motse are my parents.

I am the eldest and have a younger brother: Kamogelo Africa Motse.

We grew up in a small settlement, which I can refer to as a Trust. We grew up poor; things were not well, as my parents struggled to put food on the table. We had to survive on wild rabbits and a variety of other animals, which my father hunted down. He also worked at the mines.

My parents also used to put food on the table through hunting so to speak. My father was one of those people who worked at the mines and was feared by virtue of being very violent due to his exposure at the mines. People were always avoiding him and would point at him as a bully. He was also a good singer, he used to sing everywhere for different audiences. He would sing acapella in his deep voice that was so deep and unique. People loved it. He was a giant, muscular, but always smart with shiny shoes and he was handsome and would attract any woman. He had looks that would attract many women – “looks to die for”. He was a charmer and fashionista. Haircut, on point, crisp ironed and tucked in shirt. During the apartheid era, men were isolated and forced to leave their wives and work in the mines. The men would come back occasionally.

He was fired; I am not sure why as my mother never explained much about it as I was still too young to question her. I remember I used to bug my mother pestering her, crying that I wanted a young brother. You know how young minds work. My memories about Dad is that he used to spoil me. He dressed me up nicely and I was one of the best dressed in my neighbourhood growing up. He used to brag about me to his friends. I would be in tune with fashion trends always, wearing a floral shirt and all neat with a belt on, shiny shoes and all. He loved me a lot. However, he was also very strict, and I received a lot of hidings from him as I hung around with my rowdy friends. I would always end up in trouble and my Dad would beat me up as a result. I was hyperactive and would be all over the location, hence also inviting trouble often. I was an urchin.

At home, I would be mischievous and be punished for it. My Dad loved dogs and he had many I guess because he used them for hunting. He was into home gardening as well as livestock rearing, including chickens. I have green fingers, and love gardening too. We also had many fruit trees. I used to take care of the livestock. I did a lot of gardening, and would sell vegetables, including spinach, to the community. I was hired to plant gardens for the neighbours because of my good gardening skills. I used to take care of many chores like fetching water or firewood and all. I had many responsibilities, which if I tried to neglect I would be beaten. I was not spoilt when it comes to house chores. Those were my childhood life experiences. It was hectic.

I finally got the young brother I had always wished for. Soon after his birth, my mother became frail and was frequently ill. She later went for blood tests and that is when it was discovered that she was HIV

positive. The day my mother went for her blood tests at Moroka Hospital we were together. That was the day she was diagnosed with the virus. I was devastated and cried a lot. My mother was not crying about the bad news instead, I was the one in so much pain and I cried for long periods. Though young, I was smart enough to know what danger lay ahead for her. I was also confused and was afraid for the future of my beloved mother.

Even as I write this story, I sometimes breakdown, as the trauma has always haunted me over the years.

That day was an emotional day for me as I cried non-stop and my mother had to lie that I was not feeling well. Can you imagine that she had to go for the blood tests on her own! My father was abusive and as I reminisce about that era, it really hurts. My father would disappear for days or weeks and would go to camp at other women's houses. He was irresponsible most of the time, as he would spend all his salary partying, drinking and sleeping around with different women. The most painful part is that, he would return home without any groceries and if ever my mother questioned him, she would be beaten to pulp. My dad was huge and vicious which made me fret to intervene during the abuse of my mother otherwise he could have beaten me to death. He was a gambler and was addicted to the Casino games. He was somehow always lucky and would win big and go on a spending spree. At times he would drag us along on his gambling sprees where he would have won free booking rooms, and we would spend some days there.

After my mother gave birth to my young brother, it became very stressful as it weighed heavily on my mother who was not feeling well. I had to do all the house chores as most of the time our father would be away. I would tend to the chickens, numerous dogs, the garden and orchard. I had to use a wheelbarrow to go fetch water, as we did not have tapped water. Starting the fire, fetching cooking fuel in the form of cow dung, and cutting down trees for firewood were part of my duties. We had no electricity. The tasks were too many for me; I never enjoyed my youth. I was forced to be a responsible young lad by my mother's plight. We were left with the mammoth task of caring for my baby brother, just the two of us.

My father was a heavy drinker, but he was that type of person who would not crawl or fall due to liquor. He would be stone drunk but would appear the same. Even the whole community was afraid of him, because he used to beat up people at a slight provocation, so everyone was afraid of him. Though appearing composed on the outside after heavy drinking, my Dad would be a monster inside whenever he unleashed his violence on us. Even kids in the community would not mess with me, because as soon as I told them I would tell my father, no one would want to mess with me. Therefore, you can imagine such a character being inside your home. The place always carried a tense atmosphere due to my monster Dad; we would all be scared to sneeze.

My mother was also very strict and I would receive a hiding from her, if ever I missed any house chore that she would have assigned me. She taught me most of the things that I know right now. Even cooking, she taught me many recipes. My mother had a big body prior to the HIV infection, and then suddenly I started noticing that my mother was slowly losing weight. She started growing thin and people started asking questions and gossiping on her state of health. That is when the stigma started. The community started marginalizing us.

I started feeling the heat at school, as fellow students would point and whisper, the stigma was just unbearable. HIV status can change your social life abruptly! You know how it is, when you live in a small estate, the whole farming community started asking leading questions and it was so traumatic. People were always on our case. I think not everything was as bad since my mother was still there and she would always take care of me.

I however regretted the fact that I had pushed her into having the little brother. I felt it was my fault that she was now in this situation. The whole situation made me bitter. My guilty conscience made me cry all

the time. I felt that she was now HIV positive because of my nagging for a little brother. Peer pressure can affect parents too I thought. As a child, I took the blame.

When she started to fall seriously ill, she had to move to my grandmother's house. I used to visit after school to check on her, but my grandmother would always prevent me from seeing her in that frail and scary condition. All skinny and gaunt. It was indeed traumatizing for my young self to see her in that sickly condition that is why my grandmother insisted that I stay out of her sick room. My mother would always tell me to be strong and to take care of my little brother. She also emphasized that I should grow up to be a good man who must respect women at all times. She tried hard to instill some good principles knowing what my monster Dad did. She hoped and prayed I would not take after him.

Time was moving and eventually my mother was the first to succumb to the pandemic in the closed community. When Mum passed away, it really affected me emotionally and I cried, sometimes for hours on end. I remember I cried so much at the funeral. We had a strong bond and I was devastated. When at first I arrived home, from school, they tried to prevent me knowing she had died and made up a story that Mum had gone to the clinic and would be back next week. Somehow, I could feel the energy around that she had passed on. Even though people tried to smile, I had a gift of reading energy around people in such situations. They later realized I could not be fooled. I started crying and could feel the sombre atmosphere that my mother was no more.

I remember I got injured during her funeral, I cut my finger so deep as I helped with chores at the funeral. We later buried her and I really felt like the world had ended for me.

After the funeral, we had family issues, people were fighting and having disagreements and it felt so confusing and stressful. I had to face life alone with my father, who was never home anyway. It was very strenuous, as I had to take care of my young brother singlehandedly. To think that I was so young and only doing standard 3 at primary school. However, I was facing this role of being a Child Head of family. I had to bath him in the morning, feed him as he was still in his first year at crèche. Therefore, I had to prepare him for school. My father was always drunk and he would come back late at night and would be gone before daybreak. His actions led to us running out of food most of the time.

My father continued with his escapades of disappearing for days on end. Whenever he returned late at night, he would be drunk, and would be gone by the time I returned from school. I started struggling a lot. Part of our clan, the ones I referred to as my relatives, were not helpful. My paternal relatives really let us down. The only person who was there for us was my Grandmother. I would then find it easy to visit my grandmother's house to find something to eat during break time at school. I would also go to her house to eat after school, which made me feel out of place. As I felt this was intrusion as it was not our house. Nonetheless, Grandma would always prepare sadza (polenta) with sour milk, which sustained me. This went on for sometime, until my grandmother adopted my little brother. Even at school, the signs were now apparent that I was destitute and had problems at home. It became evident that I was staying alone.

My scruffiness sold me out. I was growing and clothes were becoming small. So were my uniforms. Now that my young brother was no longer home, my dad would disappear for three or more days. My struggles started affecting my schoolwork and my character, and I started getting in to fights frequently. My father would sometimes return with a package of fast foods for me to eat. By that time my Dad was already getting a pension or what we call HIV allowance as per the South African laws. He would take that stipend and spend it on booze and he would always be drunk. On rare occasions, he would bring a few items and some food. I would always be alone now that my little brother was no longer living with us. You can imagine what I would have done had my grandmother not been available.

I still had to attain my education up to high school. You can imagine a destitute dirty child, and my appearance spoke volumes about my situation at home.

I was forced to be strong and protect myself. Fortunately, I was streetwise and adventurous and had a full knowledge of how to roam the streets. I was rough, playful and outgoing. Other kids would stigmatise me, and make jokes about my HIV affected parents, which made me get into many fights. I was always angry with anyone who mocked me for being an Aids victim and how scruffy I looked. It was painful and not easy to swallow. It was not easy for me to deal with that kind of a situation. A child can never really remember to bath on time or launder clothes and change. So my appearance also added to the reason for mockery. I started isolating myself from other kids as I felt out of place, like an outcast. It really stressed me, as every child needs time to play and mingle with others. It was so heavy to deal with.

To make matters worse my father also fell ill, succumbed to the virus and died. That is when all hell broke loose. I really felt the heat. After the funeral, everyone just vanished, forgetting that there were two orphans in need of care. Nobody seemed to remember that we existed; it was as if we were living in a ghost town. People were minding their business and families. Some had been supportive during the funeral, but left soon after even the leftover food disappeared especially delicacies like meat. They looted everything, without giving a whiff. No one even cared about us. I am not sure if my father had been paying for his funeral assurance. Even to dress up for the funeral service was not easy. I had to borrow an old t-shirt from a cousin. My cousin was thinner than I was and his shirt would not fit me well and made me really look gloomy which made me look like a real destitute orphan.

Everyone felt shame for me. My appearance really did not present a picture of hope for the future ahead. I was carrying my young brother all the time throughout the funeral. You can try to visualize what a sorrowful sight we portrayed. Even the tent was left pitched and chairs scattered and strewn all over and I had to clean up all by myself. Then came the next morning, where we had to do the traditional ceremony of slaughtering a goat and I would have to be given a black tag of cloth to place on my clothes to signify that I was in mourning.

My paternal relatives really showed me that they did not give a hoot about me. It was a welcome to hell phase. I really felt that I was an AIDS orphan.

It was as if I was initiated into being a street kid just roaming without anyone taking care of me. I was now like a broken arrow doing as I felt. I was now associating with the wrong kids. As we were near a town, it was easy for me to join other school dropouts roaming the alleys of the town. I was out of control and obviously, drugs could not have missed me. I did not care. I was now part of all the wrong things in the street. Even missing school at will. I also looked shabby as I went into the schoolyard and it was very clear that I had no one at home who cared how I dressed or appeared. I was dirty and a true outcast. My relatives were just not there. I could get drunk and I was a lone ranger.

I was tagged by a nickname 'Ugly' as it was only fair to give me such a label. I truly represented ugliness, what with that slime and grime. The way other kids treated me because of my dirty appearance forced me to shun away from the school playgrounds. My self-esteem dropped to its lowest point. I was demoralized, and started to dodge school and joined the crew that was sleeping behind shops in town and became a regular there. My place was a bit far from town but because of roaming it was easy for me to mingle with the town street kids and to me they became family in a way. We were eating from dustbins and everything else that happens on the street. I would get drunk and I would forget my painful life. I was now a lone Wolf.

This went on until I started getting some “piece jobs” washing cars - the life of a street kid. I also had a part-time job at a mortuary as a cleaner and all sorts of other “piece jobs”. I had to balance it with high

school. I was now in grade eleven. I had to balance everything in a way, as I had to concentrate so that I could matriculate (finish high school). I had to focus. It was stressful. That is when my mother's sister chipped in and offered to stay with us. It was fine but not fun. It came with its challenges, as I was not accustomed to staying in a family setup anymore. Also because of not being part of the family, I was abused along the way. From name-calling, to being denied access to food and being constantly reminded that, I was a good for nothing, ugly and could not achieve anything in life. Sometimes I would constantly be told that this was not in my parents' house. Sometimes food would be hidden out of sight. This situation was different from my grandmother's house where I would always be fed. Especially Pap (sadza - pollenta) and milk. I practically grew up on that, because my grandmother had some cattle, so milk was like a staple relish so to speak. I loved it.

Therefore, my grandmother's place became my refuge whenever I was denied food at my aunt's place. My aunt's name is MmaMetsi Anna Meriri. Things became bad when my Aunt went for the initiation of spirituality at the Motouleng Caves. She went there for five years and that is when things really got bad. She was the only person who really cared for me at her house. It was crazy since we were staying with many other abusive cousins in a full house. Some statements like 'You want to appear smart', 'this is not your home' continued. They felt I was intruding into their lives or imposing. However I was quite responsible and resourceful as I helped in fixing the poultry house if it showed signs of falling. I was also good at planting crops and gardening. I helped in many ways like cleaning the yard etc. My young brother was still staying with my grandmother. I used to cry a lot, wondering why my parents had left me. I managed to live through the abuse and managed to matriculate. I practically survived off some of my teachers who donated bits and pieces towards my livelihood. Some offered me food and some clothes. Even the clothes I wore on the graduation Bowl Dance were from the teachers.

I now write about this part of my life, but during those days, it was painful. Regardless of my cousins and schoolmates' ill treatment and hostility, it was not nice and I do not wish anyone to be treated the way I was treated. I can now talk about it to them through this script. It is now a story and the past is past.

I am now successful; I managed to pass my Bachelor's degree. I wanted to study nursing but was rejected, so I opted to study art. I adopted Rastafarianism and I started to paint. Growing up I loved art, so I am doing something I have always wanted. We paint people's house numbers and it is putting food on my table.

So here I am - I am a lone wolf. Even when I was at University, I had to work at this factory during the night as I juggled studying and work. I would walk to campus during the day.

The story of my life is it was hard, super hard. As I fought the HIV/AIDS stigma. Losing both parents, how people treated me, and how my father abused my mother. I had to do things, which I regret, yet I went through it. At times bullying people, stealing from shops, drinking and living dangerously. It is all part of an AIDS orphan's life. Mine turned out great but some are not so fortunate. Some end up perishing due to lack of support from their families. Therefore, I hope this story does educate all those relatives surrounded by the HIV affected, to wise up and treat them well and in a dignified manner.

## Silas Motse Bio



Silas Motse also known as (AKA) ‘Ras’ was born and bred in Thaba Nchu, a small isolated town called Motlatla in the Free State, South Africa. He holds a diploma in Fine Arts and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from the Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein. He is presently a Forensic analyst as a Facial identification artist for the South African Police Service (SAPS).

## **A Beautiful Game that Brought Painful Scars to my Life - by Charity Mushonga**

It has been five horrifying years since I became wary of my HIV-positive status. The word "positive" traditionally brings hope and bliss. This positive state brought a heap of negative thoughts, painful life experiences and horrible memories. I do not have a pinch of an idea about where and when I was infected by this pandemic that brings shivers down humanity's spines. I have had to perpetually deal with whispers that trail behind me as I pass by gossips loitering in my street.

"Her husband died five years ago, but she still looks strong, nhai!"

Mrs. Duma and Mai Nzou greet me with quarter to three smiles on their faces, but as soon as they think I am out of earshot, they continue talking about how it is a matter of time before I become symptomatic and eventually succumb to the ravages of AIDS. I cannot stop wondering whether they know their HIV statuses.

What does the death of my husband have to do with them?

I seethe with anger as I go home. I thought there have always been widows in this entire world since time immemorial. I recalled the widow of Zarephath in the Bible and felt consoled. I, however, do not blame those that find such talk as sweet gossip. This is maybe because HIV is undoubtedly something to talk about as long as it remains without a cure.

No one can claim to come from a family where HIV has not yet knocked on their doors. The story becomes a bit different if an infected person develops AIDS, falls ill, and has to be taken care of. When my husband Ken was diagnosed with HIV, he deteriorated quickly in twelve months. I had to take full responsibility for his care and apply for a leave of absence from my workplace. Friends, workmates and family members would peep in once a while to check how he had spent the night. Whenever they left, I would spend the better part of the day with the love of my life for the greater part of the day and night.

I had never realised that the ticking of the second hand on the wall clock in our matrimonial bedroom was so loud. Now that I could hear it move clearly, I discovered that a second could last a minute, and a minute would appear to last five long minutes and so forth, depending on the circumstances around someone. Whenever I raised my head during the night to check the time, I was always disappointed to find that the hour hand had hardly moved an inch. It seemed like an eternity.

The ticking on the cursed clock rhymed with the moans and groans of my husband. The man was in great pain, although I never wished I could be in his shoes as a way to lessen his burden. Nonetheless, I felt pain. My husband could not fall asleep. Insomnia had crept in.

I am sure my husband could have traded anything for a good night's sleep. He could have done it without giving it a second thought. Even the house that gave him a roof over his head could have been traded in so that he could get one pain-free restful night. He would not regret it. He could no longer move in bed and had to remain glued in one position save his blinking eyes. It was my call to shift him regularly to prevent bed or pressure sores. All his strength had gone, sapped out by the virus in a few months. Now he was all skin and bones and shrivelled.

I do not mean to be rude, but if he were to be folded up, he could easily fit in a backpack. I am just being factual. Moreover, I cannot be rude to the love of my life. Remember, I stood by him through thick and thin. I shared a bed with him throughout his journey. The picture of my husband's last days on earth will linger in my memory eternally.

I wish I could forget and move on, but rubbing the picture out of my conscience is impossible, as much as I would want to remove it. It has proved to be a mammoth task. I find it impossible to brush it to the back of my mind. When Ken had to be hospitalised, I spent those long nights sleeping under his hospital bed. The Shamu Mission Hospital authorities ordered me to nurse him and care for him overnight. I had always believed that Mission hospitals were the best example of Florence Nightingale's legacy regarding hospitality, top-of-the-range care and all.

And yet, here I was facing discrimination from the staff. All they did was bring pills on a tray, and they would order me to give him the medication. The nurse on night duty would bark the order. I always kept my faith and hoped he would recover with time. I had to follow the nurse's orders like a junior military recruit. I would sometimes feel like giving Ken medicine was a waste of resources. When Ken wanted to relieve himself, I had to take him to the male toilet using a wheelchair. Where I would gather all my feminine strength to lift him onto the toilet seat. Then I would wait to stand beside him, as a five-star hotel server does, diligently. Forget about the stench in the male toilet. I had to provide a good service (for better or worse). MARITAL VOWS say it all 'in sickness and in health'.

Somehow, my mind reminisced the words we exchanged a few years back at our wedding. I unconsciously looked at the ring around my finger, it meant a lot to me and for some reason, and it gave me some supernatural courage to soldier on. After some weeks of sleepless nights, with me sleeping under a hospital bed, the doctor decided to discharge my husband. He said Ken needed some home-based care. The news came to me like pleasant fireworks.

Going home at last, phew!

There is no better place than home. Even Ken was pleased with the new developments. On hearing the good news, his face lit up for a while.

"I am so happy to be going home", he groaned.

How I wished he had always loved staying home, probably we would not be in this terrible situation in the first place. During that era, there were no ARVs. They were not readily available, especially in developing countries. To the common people, we only heard through rumours that ARVs were used with modest efficacy in countries overseas. Only a few elite government officials or the well-up people could afford and access them. Therefore, I knew it was not long before I was clothed as a very young widow in black. On getting home, I never got the rest I had anticipated. I was always on my toes. Occasionally, Ken would ask me to prepare him sadza and okra. It would not take long before he changed his mind within an hour to crave for rice and soup before the first meal was even ready. I, at times, would quiver with anger and annoyance. I would grow impatient. I am no saint, for I am human after all. Relatives who frequently visited from the rural areas would be present, but I guess due to stigma and ignorance, they never offered to assist in nursing Ken. The relatives would remain glued to the screen as if they had only travelled to watch television. Funny enough, they also expected to be lavishly hosted.

Meanwhile Ken would ask for water to soothe his dry throat. Frequently, I had to run back and forth from my bedroom to take care of my husband. I would then return to the kitchen to prepare the meal for the visitors. During those days, people were misinformed and believed one would easily contract HIV from an

infected person by contacting the person or using a utensil. Their attitudes further added misery to my already depressed body and soul. The behaviour of my relatives often caused a big lump in my throat from ire.

What was going through my relatives' minds, I wondered. I put a lot of effort into remaining composed when my husband requested a wet towel to cool off his forehead and would call for a dry one within the same breath. I had to be super swift, or he would start groaning loudly in obvious pain. The man was in torment. I could not believe that the skeletal structure lying in bed was the same man who was once a hunk, powerful, with an athletic build and a great soccer lover and player. Somehow, I suspect that Ken's love for the beautiful game threw us into a hell we were now swimming up to our necks in.

One lazy weekend, we took a love stroll around the Growth-point where we resided. We passed by a soccer field where a "boozers" social football match was being played, and Ken was hooked. The following weekend he traced back to the pitch and joined the club, which had nominated him to become the Captain by year's end. The group was a jovial lot who travelled around the province where they played against other teams.

As they went about their favourite pastime, they attracted hordes of supporters who included some female cheer group composed of women of loose morals. They were not only after Maradona's game, but they harboured other dangerous agendas. These women did not deserve a cheerleader's title. They were like wolves in sheep's skin, ready to devour any vulnerable prey at their disposal. I told my husband bluntly that I disapproved of the social club with such women. Such women had other motives other than just being cheerleaders. They were cunning husband snatchers. They would sing and gyrate their waistlines seductively in cheerleaders' prowess while fishing for men as they were also into commercial sex work, other than soccer supporting. My husband rebuked me for being unnecessarily paranoid.

If the truth were told, the female supporters would always give other favours, including casual sex, especially when the team had won and was in a celebratory mood. When I got wind of such things happening in the camp. I demanded that I join Ken on the next trip to the social soccer game. However, he refused flatly, saying that 'the social soccer environment was not conducive for housewives.' That statement was laden with a deeper meaning, which sent me into a frenzy of anger and disdain. I was unsure whether I was cross with Ken, the soccer team or the woman supporters. I coughed up some harsh words and strong sentiments with a lump of anger. 'If you get AIDS from your prostitute supporters, don't say I didn't warn you. I will not nurse you. Instead, your supporters are the ones who will have to come and nurse you.'

He retorted, 'is AIDS is acquired by playing soccer?' Ken and I had never raised voices at each other, but the tables had turned on that particular day it happened. I gave him my piece of mind, and he gave me his too. We argued, shouted, quarreled and cursed at each other's faces. Like they do in the movies. Therefore, when a few years later, Ken became seriously ill, I would find myself in an 'I told you so mood'. Nonetheless, I was quick to remember not to let the mood show, as I had repeated the words far too many times. It was no longer proper to act up and be rude to an invalid. I was often moody and angry with myself and with almost everyone, including life itself. I felt as if life was not fair. Never in my entire life had I contemplated myself sinking into such a quagmire.

For three months, my husband could not get out of bed. Our bedroom had become his sick room, lounge, dining room, and restroom. His parents were convinced that their son had been bewitched. Hence, he needed a traditional healer. It was beyond my beliefs, so I came up with a lame excuse: that the house belonged to the government, so no voodoo man could be allowed to perform any ritual or healing act. Last we risked being incarcerated. Therefore, they opted for plan B to hire a car and ferry him to the Traditional Healer instead. I told them that there was no money to hire a private car. It was a fact! We were strained

financially as I had been hiring expensive cars to get Ken to and from the hospital for reviews. More than a million things needed to share my shoestring budget. Hospital bills were waiting, medicines and many more.

In addition, I had to feed all relatives who frequently visited. The relatives did not know how expensive it was to hire a car to the Medical Center. Some of the taxi drivers profited off our desperate situation. They were heartless. If only they cared about how much I struggled to make ends meet. Most of these vehicle owners had the premonition that Teachers were well resourced, and since my husband and I were teachers, it worsened my plight. Occasionally, fortune would smile at us when a family friend would volunteer to ferry us to the hospital at no cost, but that was not a regular thing to expect.

My husband's eventual death came after a fierce battle drained everything from finances, to energy and zeal to live. My husband and I first met at the Midlands Teachers College. We bumped into each other at a College drama group. We were an excellent pair on set and became friends because of that. We were both excellent actors and naturally became friends. We never anticipated that we would end up married. This was mainly because I already had a boyfriend called Rex. My boyfriend worked in the Air force, where he was a trainee Pilot. We started as pen pals with Rex when he was training to be an airman based in Pyongyang. Those days it was a cool high school stunt to have a pen pal abroad. This was soon after our country had gotten its independence, long before the advent of the Look East policy. I presume that is when it started.

On his return from abroad, Rex paid me a courtesy call. It became our first encounter face to face. The man was not as handsome as he looked in the photographs he used to send me. However, he was palatable, in any case. There seemed to be a natural flow and attraction. Wow! There were obvious love sparks, and we mutually felt the vibes and believed it was love at first sight. Now, when I reflect on these historic love vibes, I realise that what I felt and appeared to be love was mere teenage infatuation, excitement, folly or even stupidity. How was it possible to fall head over heels in love with someone whose personality I hardly knew and had only seen in photographs?

We kept in touch through letters and telephone calls. The following year, I enrolled at the Teacher's college to start my career. Then Rex was deployed in the same city by chance, and I thought, wow! It is a good sign. It appeared we were finally destined to be together. We were going to have fun. Since I was a resident at college, without my parents' restrictions, we would have a time of our lives. I would see Rex during the weekend and whenever I did not have lectures. I met him sometimes at the Officers' Mess Club. In some instances, Rex would surprise me during the week. He would pop unannounced at college. He used to drive a ramshackle government navy blue truck. I felt like a Princess as it was prestigious to be seen dating a young man who was gainfully employed and had a sleek ride. Therefore, I became one of those lucky girls who had won a jackpot to catch such a hunk.

It was common on campus to mock all the girls who dated pedestrians. Worse if the boyfriend was a pedagogue or a fellow student. I would mock other girls; my colleagues were all green with envy. I was only nineteen and naive. I later discovered that my Mr. Right catch was a pathetic Cassanova. One who did it with arrogance and pomposity. I discovered a diary that he kept about all his affairs. He also filed letters from all his woman friends. I still wonder whether he kept all that information for a museum article...

The man was addicted to love. He also carried a bag of condoms and kept some in his pockets. When I confronted him about his multiple affairs and his queer wealth of safe sex accessories, he did not dispute it but bragged that he was only human. A man with needs, he claimed he needed intimacy, which he alleged I had failed to satisfy as I chose to abstain from sex. He showed no remorse and regret in his decisions and wayward behaviour. He said he respected my decision to abstain but urged me not to worry as he was still

prepared to marry me. He said that in the meantime, his life of sex could not stop. He even said bluntly that he would only stop womanising as soon as we got married. Gosh! That is when it hit me, and I got a rude awakening. That is when I opted out of that rotten corrosive relationship.

He was a heartless monster, and I would be stupid to keep hanging in there for prestige or peer pressure at college. Painstakingly, I searched for love in his heart and soul but found nothing, not even an iota. Rex was just not the loving type. He was a hit-and-run kind of person. Looking back, I wonder how and why I wasted my time hanging on to that relationship for so long. He was a ruthless sex maniac. His mind processed nothing else but sex. 'If you can't give it to me, I cannot go hungry. I have to relieve myself by getting it from someone else until we get married' he would bluntly say in my face. I do not understand why he had this hold on me. It was as if I was under a spell. I called it quits one Sunday afternoon when Rex tried to force himself on me. He had suddenly turned into a fierce monster, with bloodshot eyes exploring my figure from hair to toe. I responded with more fierceness than he expected. A sudden adrenaline rush flushed through my veins. I knew I had to defend myself. At first, I thought of screaming my lungs out, but I was quick to control myself. I dismissed the idea, as rescuers would then ask why I had locked myself in with Rex in the first place.

If he were to rape me, my parents would hear about it, and I could hear my father's booming voice: "I sent you to college, yet you go about gallivanting, looking for boyfriends." His words of advice and warning about not being serious with schoolwork echoed in my mind. I fought like a lioness and sunk my teeth deep into Rex's neck. He set me free at once. As he had tried to drive his manhood into me, I felt the Biblical Samson strength possessing me at that juncture. With threats and curses under his breath, he asked me why I had visited him if I loathed intimacy to such an extent. Perhaps he was right in a way. I picked myself up, grabbed my purse, rushed out, and went straight to the hitchhiking place heading back to college, without even bothering about Rex giving me a lift, as was always the norm. I was free from the jaws of a crocodile, an uncaring human being, a sex predator, a maniac and a pervert.

On arrival on campus, I felt like a heroine. I had made it. At last, I had to extricate myself from the vice of an alligator. I do not know why until now; I never bothered to tell my friends Annah and Hilda about my horrible predicament. I just told them that I had broken up with my Airman. They were baffled and speechless. I told them I was not ready to become a Pilot's wife. They felt that I had missed a golden opportunity. They believed that every girl's dream was to become a Pilot's wife. I just did not care anymore; peer pressure would never persuade me this time. I had made up my mind. Having gone through the worst experience, any vulnerable girl would ever imagine. Why would I risk being infected with all sorts of sexually transmitted diseases just to be a Pilot's wife?

Hell no!

I was not going down that road. I vowed I was never going to have another relationship ever again. I had just had enough. In the following weeks, Rex came to apologise several times as he tried to win back my affection. I stood my ground and shut the door in his face. There was no way I would be foolish enough to fall into the same trap twice. Now that I knew his true colours, I was not budging. I now could see that he just wanted to be a hero who would conquer my virginity and then dump me soon after. He even nicknamed me 'Mai Maria Musande' (after the biblical Virgin Mary) because I had refused to sleep with him. I busied myself with schoolwork and various other college activities. I joined a college Drama club where I spent more time memorising scripts and rehearsing. One of our tutors authored the scripts. We had one of the most seasoned playwrights leading the club. Acting was my passion, and I enjoyed it a lot. I was a natural-born actor, proven since childhood at the preschool level. I am not bragging. I made a name for myself. I performed several times before big audiences.

During these rehearsals, I met Ken, who later became my husband. We both loved acting and were quick to become friends. He was very reserved, and we talked very little. He was an introvert, I can say. Eventually, we became closer and got to know each other, like when I learned he had a dozen siblings. At first, I took it as a joke, yet it was a fact. He was a bit boring socially, but I liked him like that. I swear I do not remember when and how the friendship developed into a love affair. What I liked most was that Ken was kind and gentle. We got to know each other, our families and all. Maybe I needed warmth and gentleness for a change, a genuine love. Compared to the Airman.

Before we went far with our new affair. Something unusual happened along the way. This young but handsome lecturer had a crush on me, oh gosh! I do not know whether this was a curse, blessing or some bad luck. I was just getting cozy in a new affair, so what was this now? What had I done to deserve this? I pretended not to notice and played it down. I dreaded a Student -Tutor relationship so much. I avoided any eye contact with him as much as possible. Whenever his voice boomed across the Lecture theatre as he dispensed his lessons. My classmates thought I was one lucky woman when one day I was elected by Mr. Jenami to collect the assignments for him. In a way, I liked it and agreed with my classmates that I was lucky. I was torn between two worlds.

When the day for collecting assignments came, I collected them and proceeded to his office. On approaching his office, I felt like a sheep encroaching an African Hyena's territory. I knocked and was soon face to face with the slender tall, handsome young lecturer. I was soon under a barrage of questions from my home area and schools attended to siblings and all. He asked if he could see more of me during my spare time. I did not openly agree or promise him anything. I remember just swinging around and bolting out of that interrogation room. It proved my suspicions and instincts that it was a planned stunt. As if that was not enough, he later proposed that we elect a class representative. For some reason, a clown in our class called Jeremiah blurted out my name. That is how I got the role, which made my escape from the love cupid-struck lecturer a mission impossible. As I soon became a regular in the lecturer's office. This marked the commencement of another horrible love affair. There was no chemistry whatsoever between Mr. Jenami and me. I felt like a prisoner. The issue at hand was that my career would be at stake as much as I would have wanted to avoid the affair with the lecturer. It would mean automatic failure as the tutors had all that power against us, especially female students. It was no new phenomenon. Such cases were common at colleges. I felt like I was serving time at Chikurubi maximum prison. I needed no prophet to remind me that if I ever resisted the lecturer's love proposal meant only one thing, failing the course. I did not want to join the 'March Movement'. A term used in labelling every student who failed the course and would have to come for a rewrite during March when others were preparing to graduate.

Therefore, it wasn't a pleasant tag to be associated with. Being the good actor I was, I succeeded in hoodwinking Mr. Jenami to believe that we were actually in love. Though it was eating me, up inside as I was growing thin and could hardly sleep. I had to carry this tag of double-crossing a student and lecturer. I became one of those girls who sold out their bodies to lecturers in exchange for high marks. What kind of Mai Maria Musande had I turned out to be? The news was making rounds on campus, with hot whispers in corridors, hostels, and lecture theatres. It was not long before Mr. Jenami got wind of it. He turned blue with anger and grew goosebumps visible from a distance. He summoned me to his suffocating office and confronted me about it. His eyes were red with rage. He warned me against ever double-crossing him, especially with a student. I vehemently denied it, of course. He frog-marched me out of his sight. The relationship did not end, but it took a new twist.

He believed it but went a step further, demanding that we solemnise our affair by going all the way, which means that we had to become intimate. No! no way, I thought ..

Why were all men the same?

Why can't two people have a sexless affair

What was wrong with these guys?

Were they all monsters?

Why did the ministry of tertiary education give these monster lecturers so much power?

They are the ones who dish out lectures and set and mark the exams. Our lives become exposed, as they will be in their hands. Students' careers are wrapped around the little fingers of these love mongers. I decided I would not see him again, whether in town where we used to meet or anywhere. I just had to avoid him at all costs. I ignored his messages as well. He got in touch with my friend Annah and demanded an explanation via a letter. He demanded a reply without fail. I told him in reply that I was busy with exam preparation and was not readily available. I heaved a sigh of relief when we finally finished writing our exams and had to leave campus. I felt like I was as free as a bird. I was now out of Jail. It felt good like a prisoner released on parole. Although home had felt like a prison before, it felt like a sanctuary this time. My parents were very strict; they would not allow their children to gallivant without a good reason or stay out late at night.

In January of the following year, I went for my teaching practice at a particular high school for my teaching practice. My student teacher boyfriend coincidentally deployed in the vicinity at some mining school. It made our love affair flourish as we frequently met. When I was around him, I had no feelings of fear or nervousness or scepticism as I did around Mr. Jenami or the ravishing Rex. I felt like I was in the company of a brother or friend. I felt very cuddly and warmed up to Ken's caresses. Ten months down the line, I discovered I was pregnant. Oh my God! I was not forced or anything like that. It had just happened.

Was I the same girl who was so much afraid of having sex?

The saint who guarded her virginity strictly?

And resisted sex for so long?

It happened mutually on one of our romantic escapades. My whole life was an abrupt somersault. Ken was not the type of guy who would force himself on anyone. Wow, I guess this is what true love spells. I had to defer my course to nurse my handsome son temporarily. Ken and I married and had a second child five years later. Our marriage was quite blissful. Until my husband hooked up with the growth point girls who doubled as soccer supporters and horny cheerleaders. They invaded my matrimonial bliss and cut it to pieces. I do not know how they managed to do that exactly.

Up to a point, my husband died of AIDS after a very long illness. My thirty-first birthday came two weeks after my husband's death. He was only thirty-five and was in the middle of undertaking a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and Statistics.

I am now fifty years old and have not managed to remarry. It would be difficult to confess to my suitors that I am HIV positive. The condition is highly stigmatised. I could marry an HIV-positive partner, but I fear he may also succumb to the disease.

What will become of my marital status, a widow again?

What if the man does not like my children?

My fears have kept me single and celibate for twenty years! I get solace when my children perform well at school. I have strong support from my siblings, parents and friends. I would not dare start another scandal of a botched affair again. I am too old for that. Of course, I have gone through a lot of trauma, stress, illnesses, and sometimes hallucinations when I first learnt that I was HIV positive. I am aware that being HIV positive is not a death sentence. Now I just hope to live long enough to witness life alongside my great-grandchildren, narrating my life's journey to them. I also pray that a cure for AIDS will be found before I approach my final resting place.

...the end.

### **Charity Mushonga Bio**



Charity Mushonga (nee Mberi). She was born on the 4th of December at Morgenster Hospital, Masvingo. She attended Chiedza and Fitchlea Primary Schools in Kwekwe. Charity attended Shungu Secondary School in the same town.

She attained a Certificate in Education from Gweru Teachers College in 1991 and studied for a Bachelor of Theology Degree with Triune University.

She is a mother of two and has lived with HIV for close to two decades.

It has always been her wish to see the stigma associated with the disease disappear. Writing her story has released the steam that has painfully lingered in her life for a very long time.

## **Mutambo Unonakidza Wakasiya Mavanga Anodzimba - naCharity Mushonga translated by Daniel Garwe**

Pave nemakore mashanu kubva pandaka tanga kurarama neutachiwana hweHIV. Shoko rekuti 'positive' pachivanhu rinounza tariro nerufaro asi kana wave kunzi uri 'HIV positive', upenyu hunenge hwaminama watarisana nerufu, zviitiko zve hupenyu zvinorwadza uye ndangariro dzinotyisa. Ini handitozivewo kuti ndakatapukirwa neutachiwana kupi uye rinhi, izvo zvinounza kudendera pasi rese kuvanhu vese vatema kana vachena. Ndakanga ndave kugara ndichitarisira kunzwa kuzevezerana kwevavakidzani shure kwangu pese pandaipfuura napo. Makuhwa munharaunda aibva atowedzerwa tumunyu netu mhiripiri.

Unonzwa vamwe voti:

"Murume wavo akafa makore mashanu apfuura asi vachiri kuratidzika kuve vakasimba, nhai!"

Mai Duma naMai Nzou vanondikwazisa nenyemwerero yezino irema pazviso zvavo, asi pavanongofunga kuti ndafamba nhambwe dzirikure zvekuti nzeve dzangu hadzichavanzwi, vanoenderera mberi nekundireva. Mhepo yaiuya kwandiri saka ndakanzwa vachitaura zvekuti nguva ya famba sei ndisati ndave nemucherechedzo wekuve murwere weShuramatongo (AIDS). Ndino shamisikawo kuti zvavanondi nongedzera koivo vanombonyatso zivawo pavamire here maererano ne chirwere ichochi. Pamwe kwaitove kusekana kwaana Kamba, nekuti varume vedu waitamba vese nhavu kwaive kuzere maHure nemaJoki ese emunhaunda yedu. Ko rufu rwemurume wangu rwaipinda papi? Rwavaibva vati nangatanga narwo. Dzimwe nguva ndinovhaira nehasha, asi rwendo rwuno ndakazvidzora ndokunanga hangu kumba. Ko inga kwagara kune chirikadzi munyika ino yose kubva kare. Ndaka rangarira chirikadzi yeZarefati mubhaibheri, ndakanzwa ku nyaradzwa. Kubva pandaka zvigashira kuti ndave kurarama neUtachiwana, handichape mhosva avo vanowana nguva yekutaura makuhwa, pamusoro pevanhu vakaita seni aiwa. Nechikonzero chekuti HIV zvirokwazvo chinhu chekutaura nezvacho kunyanya takatarisa kuti haisati yawanirwa mushonga unoirapa. Hapana angati anobva kumhuri isati yagogodzwa pamusuo ne chirwere che Mukondombera cheAIDS. Nyaya yacho inozoti siyanei kana munhu ane utachiona akazorwara zvakaipisira neAIDS, kurwara zvekuto pinda muchipatara kana zvekuzoda kupepwa munhu uri kumba. Murume wangu Ken paakaonekwa aine utachiona hweHIV aka kasika kutsimbirirwa nahwo zvekuti mukati memwedzi gumi ne miviri bedzi akange atove rengenya. Ndaifanira kutotakurana nemutoro wacho wokurwara kwake uye ndakatozo kumbira zororo kubasa kwangu. Zvaiti shamwari, vandinoshandana navo uye hama vaiuya pano neapo kuti vazomudongorera kuti hutano hwake huriseyi. Pese pavaidzokera ndaiswera naye murume siku nesikati. Ndainge ndisati ndambozvi wongorora kuti kufamba kwe Chiringazuva chekumadziro mumba medu mekurara kwaive neruzha. Zvino nekuti ndaishaiwa hope uye kurwarirwa, pane nhambo dzepakati pehusiku dzandai zvinzwa. Kana uri pakushungurudzika kwandaive nguva dzacho hadzifambi, unopinduka wapindikazve, uchiti zvimwe nguva dzafamba izvo kwaani, Chiringazuva chaitoita sechakamira. Pose pandai simudza musoro wangu pakati pousiku kuti nditarise nguva, ndaitozo rwadziwa mwoyo kuona kuti nguva yacho yakanga isati yambofamba. Zvai ita sezvisingagumi, kukwenya kwe chiringazuva kwainzwicka kuchi enderana nekugomera uye kushinyira kwe murume wangu. Murume akarwadziwa zvikuru pakurarama mazuva ake ekupedzesera iyeye. Kunyange zvazvo ndaisamboshuvira kuti dai ndaigona kuva pashangu dzake, senzira yokubatsiridza kuderedza nayo mutoro wake.

Nyangwe zvakadaro, ndakanzwa marwadzo zvimwe chetezvo, kuita sekuti ndini ndairwara. Murume wangu aitadza kurara, kushaya hope kwa kanga kwa mupinda. Ndine chokwadi chokuti murume wangu angadai akatengesa chero chinhu kuti arare zvakanaka, angadayi akazviita asina kumbo funga kaviri. Kana kuzengurira. Kunyangwe dai akanzi tengesa imba yatiri kugara, yaigona kunge yakatengeswa, kungoita kuti awane husiku humwe husina kurwadziwa kuti awane kuzorora. Akange asisakwanise kupfakanyika zvizhinji pamubhedha akanga angoramba akanamatira panzvimbo imwe chete kunze kweku bwaira

kwezisu. Kwaitodiwa munhu kuti amushandure nguva dzose kudzivirira maronda ekumanidzika kwenyama. Simba rake rose rakanga rapera, neutachiona mumwedzi mishomanana. Zvino akanga angosara mapfupa uye musoro bedzi. Handirevi zvekumu nyomba, asi kana aizo petwa, aigona kupinda mubhegi revana vechikoro. Ndiri kungotaura chokwadi, uyezve handikwanise kunyomba zve hutsinye kune mudiwa wangu. Rangarirai kuti ndini ndega ndakamira naye mukati mourwere hwake mwedzi yose yaaka yawaya. Ndairara padivi naye mumachira mazuma ose. Mufananidzo we mazuva okupedzisira nemurume wangu panyika ucharamba uri mu ndangariro dzangu nekusingaperi. Kunyanya pese pandinoona mutambo weNhabvu uchibuda pachivhitivhiti. Ndinomboto shuvirawo kudzima kana kukanganwa marwadzo iwaya ndienderere mberi nehupenyu. Asi kubvisa ndangariro kubva muhana yangu hazvisi nyore. Raiva basa guru, ndino wona zvisiri nyore kurasa mifungo iyi kuseri kwe ndangariro dzangu.

Husiku hwega hwega hwandaka pedza naKen muchipatara paairwarisa, ndakahu pedza ndichi rara pasi pomu bhedha wake. Vakuru vepa chipatara cheShamu Mission vakanditi ndimu pepe nekumu chengeta usiku hwese. Ndakanga ndagara ndichitenda kuti zvipatara zveMission ndiwo muenzaniso wakanakisa we nhaka ya Florence Nightingale kana takatarisa pakugamuchira vayeni kana pakubata varwere zvakanaka, kana pakuva chengetedza uye zvimwe zvese. Asi apa ndakanga ndatarisana nerusarura kubva kuvashandi. HIV hapana paisinga semwe kana kusarurwa. Chavayingoita kuuya nemapiritsi vosiya vakomekedza kuti ndizomupe mushonga wacho. Ndizvo zvega zvayi itwa neMukoti aishanda husiku.

Ndaigara nemurume wangu mukutenda uye ndaitarisira kuti aizopora nokufamba kwenguva. Ndai fanira kutevedzera murayiro waMukoti semwana wechidiki achangobva kupinda muchiuto. Pane dzimwe nguva dzandainzwa sokuti kupa Ken mushonga kwaitove kutambisa nguva nezvinhu. Zvichibva mukuwondoroka nekuperezeka muviri kwake. Pese paayinzwa kuda kuzvi batsira ndayi muendesa kuchimbuzi chevarume ndichishandisa Wheelchair. Kwandaizo unganidza simba rangu rose rechikadzi kuti ndimu simudze ndichi muyisa pachimbuzi. Ipapo ndai mirira ndakamira padivi pake sezvinoita mushandi wehotera yepamusoro, ndichi shingaira. Tisinga taure nezve kunhuwa kwemu chimbuzi chevarume, ndaifanira kuita basa rakanaka. Mhiko dzepa wanano ndidzo dzaindi sunda kazhinji. Dzinoti 'mukurwara uye muhutano'. Sezvinei pfungwa dzangu dzaka rangarira mashoko aya atakambo taurirana makore mashoma kumashure pamuchato wedu. Ndakatarisa mhete yaive pa munwe wangu, yaibva yandi yeuchidza zvakanakisa, nekudaro zvaka ndipa hushingi huno shamisa hwokuti ndirwire mudiwa wangu. Hondo yemukondombera haisi nyore vadikani. Zvikuru kudyungu muchembere weDatya

Pashure pemavhiki akati kuti ndisingarari zvakanaka, apo ndairara pasi pemubhedha wemurwere muchipatara,

Nerimwe ramazuva Chiremba akasarudza kubuditsa murume wangu muchipatara. Akati Ken aida rubatsiro achirwarira mumba. Shoko iri rakauya kwandiri sechinhu chinofadza. Kuenda kumba pakupedzisira, weduwee! Iko hakuna nzvimbo iri nani senge munhu kurwara ari mumba pedyo nehama dzake. Kunyangwe Ken akafadzwa akava nekuvandudzwa kutsva. Paakanzwa mashoko akanaka chiso chake chakapinda kwekanguva. "Ndiri kunzwa kufara kuenda kumba" - akagomera achidudza mashoko egwinyiso.

Ndaka demba kuti dai akagara achifarira hake kugara pamba, pamwe tingadai tisiri mumamiriro ezvinhu akashata aya. Parumana nzombe chaipo ndipo pataive. T Kuda kubuda kwake kwakamusvitsa pakuenda kumutambo wenhabvu kunove ndiko kwaakazo nombora chirwere. Panguva iyoyo kwakanga kusina maARV, akanga asinga wanikwi nyore nyore, kunyanya munyika dzichiri kusimukira. Kuvanhuwo zvavo taingonzwa karunyerekupe kekuti maARV akange aveko uye ayi shandiswa zvine mwero munyika dziri mhiri kwemakungwa. Vashoma vevakuru vakuru vehurumende kana kuti vanhu shoroma chete ndivo vaikwanisa kumawana. Saka ndakaziva kuti mazuva angu ekuve Shirikadzi akanga aswedera uye nguva yangu yekupfeka zvitema, se chirikadzi yechidiki yakanga yadongorera.

Ndichisvika kumba handina kuzombowana zororo randaiwa ndakatarisira. Ndaigara ndiri wekudauka dauka ndichiti bate pano bate apo, bate chino, rege. Pane imwe nguva yekuti Ken aiti ndimugadzirire sadza neDerere. Hazvaitora nguva refu asati ahandura pfungwa dzake mukati meawa imwe kuti anzwe kuda mupunga nemuto, zvokudya zva atanga kukumbira kubikirwa zvisati zvaibva. Dzimwe nguva zvainzwa hashu uye kusvotwa. Ndaka wanikwa ndichi tadza kutsungirira, ko ndiniwo ndadii, handisi mutsvene, nekuti ndiri munhu wenyama. Nyangwe zvazvo vehukama vaiwanzoshanya kubva kwakasiyana siyana, hapano pakuzoyeuka kundichingura pamutoro weurwere. Ndinofungidzira nekuda kwekusema nekusaziva zvizhinji pamusoro peutachiwana hwe HIV, hapana aimbozvipira kubatsirana kupepa Ken. Hama dzacho dzairamba dzakanamira pamberi pechivhitivhiti sekuti ndizvo zvavainge vainga. Ukuwo Ken ayi gona kukumbira mvura yekunyevenutsa huro yake ya kanga yaoma kana kanokwana kana paawa yoga yoga kana kuti pfuura. Ndayi fanira kumhanya ndichikwidza nokudzika kubva muimba yangu yokurara kuti ndibatsire murume wangu. Ndaibva ndadzoka ku imba yekubikira kuno pedzisa kubikira vaenzi chikafu zvekare. Pamazuva iwayo vanhu vaiudzwa zvisizvo uye vaitenda kuti munhu aizobata HIV kubva kumunhu ane utachiona nyore nyore, nokusangana nemunhu wacho kana kuti chero chese chashandiswa nemunhu ane utachiwana ukachibata watotapurana nazvo. Maitiro avo akawedzera nhamo pakurarama kwangu uye mwoyo wangu wakanga watowora. Maitiro ehama dzangu aiwanzo konzera bundu pahuro pangu nekuda kwe shungu nehasha. Chii chayi itika mupfungwa dze hama dzangu? Ndaka zvibvunza. Pane mumwe musu, ndaka yedza zvakanyanya kuti ndirambe ndakagadzikana apo murume wangu akakumbira tawuro nyoro kuti atonhodze huma yake. Asi zvekare aibva adaidzira kuti ndaakuda tawuro rakaoma nguva imwechete iyoyo. Pfungwa dzake dzakanga dzisisina kugadzikana nekuda kwekurwara. Ndayito fanira kuzvi ita neku kasika, kuitira kana aizotanga ku gomera achiridza kurwadziwa. Murume wangu akanga achirwadziwa hama wee. Hamuna chamakaona. Ndakanga ndisingagoni kutenda kuti marangwanda akarara pamubhedha akanga ari murume wangu mumwe chete anova ayimbova Hwitakwi yerume. Aive akasimba zvikuru, aine unyanzvi hwekumhanya uye ari mutambi mukuru wenhabvu. Se zvinei ndinofungidzira kuti kuda kwaKen mutambo wenhabvu, kwakatikanda mugehena rinopisa iro takanga tava kushambira kusvika muhuro medu chaimo. Zvekuriritira vana sa Ama handichataura nezvazvo. Vana vedu vakange vatove senherera nekuda kwekuva shaira nguva ndichipepa murwere.

Nyaya yekutapukira kweutachiwana yakatanga sezvizi. Zvakaitika kuti nerimwewo vhiki takatora mukana sevano danana tichifamba tichi ndenderedzana hedu nekurezvana. Takatenderera munharaunda mataigara ndokupfuura nepane imwe nhandare yenhavvu yaitambwa mutambo pakati pe zvidhakwa, ndokubva Ken ayeeverwa semunhu aichiugona mutambo wenhabvu akanzwa kudokwairira kuvemo mumutambo. Pakupera kwesvondo rakatevera chokwadi akadzoka kunhandare ndoku batana nevamwe. Gore parakazosara kupera akanga asarudzwa kuti ave Mutungamiri watinoti Captain we chikwata ichi. Zvidhakwa zvayi fara chose chikwata chaipota chichitenderera mamwe matunhu umo chaitamba ne zvimwe zvikwata zvenhabvu yevarume. Pavai famba kudaro vachi tandara zvavo, vaka pedzesera vakwezva mhomho yevatsigiri vaisanganisira boka re vakadzi remafaro raiumbwa nevakadzi vane tsika dzakashata. Vakanga vasiri chete mukufarira ne kukuza vatambi ve mutambo waGeorge Shaya asi vaka rongedza mamwe matarenda ane njodzi aisanganisira kutengesa miviri, nekungoita bonde nemurume wese wese. Vakadzi ava, vakanga vakaita semhumhi dzakapfeka dehwe remakwai dzakagadzirira kudya mhuka yavaigona kuwana. Ndaka udza murume wangu pachena kuti ndakanga ndisinga bvumirani nechikwata chese chevanhukadzi vakadai. Vakadzi vakadaro vaive nezvimwe zvinangwa zvisiri kungova vatungamiriri vekukuza nhavvu nemufaro. Vaive vane hunyanzvi hwekubvuta varume kana vanemichato. Vaipota vachiimba neku tambisa zviuno zvavo vachizvizvonyongotsa, nekukurunga kuita sevaka sikwa vasina mabhonzo. Kuri kunyepera kukuza chikwata, asi panguva imwe chete vachiredza varume sezvavakanga vari kuita zveku tengesa miviri vachipa bonde chero ani hake asina hunhu.

Murume wangu akandi tsiura kuti ndisaite shanje dzisina basa. Akandi vimbisa kuti aifambira nhavvu yega, kwete zvizhinji. Vatsigiri vechikadzi vaingogara vachipa zvimwe zvinhu zvino sanganisira kuita

zvepabonde zvisina mukare akamboona, zvikuru apo chikwata chainge chakunda uye mukupemberera. Panda kanzwa zvinhu zvakadai zvichi itika mumusasa. Ndakanzwa shungu kuti ndifambidzane naKen parwendo rwaitevera rwe kumutambo wenhabvu. Asi akaramba zvachose achiti kumitambo yenhavvu hakukodzeri kuyendwa nemadzimai emumba. Mashoko iwayo pachawo aive akazadzwa nerevo yakadzama izvo zvakaita kuti ndiite hasha neshungu. Ndai tsamwira zvese chikwata chenhavvu ne vatsigiri vechikadzi vaive ne tsika dzakafumuka, zvaigona kuparadzira chirwere cheMukondombera. Nebundu rehasha muhuro mangu ndakakwanisa kukosora mashoko makukutu uye anehasha.

'Kana ukatapurirwa AIDS kubva ku vatsigiri vako vechi pfambi, usazoti handina kukuyambira. Handiku pepe kana worwara, pakati pe vatsigiri vako ndipo pachabva vanhu vano fanira kuuya kuzoku pepa'

Akapindura achiti:

'Ndizvozvo kana AIDS ichi wanikwa nokutamba nhavvu.'

Ini naKen takanga tisina kumbobvira tasimudzirana mazwi, asi musi iwoyo zvakaitika, zvinhu zvakanga zvasanduka. Ndakamupa pfungwa dzangu achibva andipawo dzake. Takanetsana, ku popota, ku kakavadzana uye kutukana, taka tsvukisirana maziso. Se zvinoita vanhu mumafirimu.

Pasina nguva refu, Ken akabva arwara zvakaipa. Ndaizo ona Ken uya ave 'ndamba kuudzwa akaonekwa nembonje pahuma'. Zvakanga zvisisa kodzeri kuitira hutsinye kumunhu asingacha gone kana kubvisa hembe ega. Kumuudza kuti uri nhinhi ndambakuudzwa zvaisazo batsira chinhu. Mazuva iwaya ndaigara ndiine kakutsamwa ku munhu wese kusanganisira hupenyu pachahwo. Ndakaona sekuti hupenyu hwakanga husina kunaka. Muupenyu hwangu hwose ndakanga ndisati ndambofunga kuti ndinonyura mumatope akadai. Kwe Mwedzi mitatu murume wangu aisagona kumuka pamu bhedha kana ku pfakanyika zvairema. Aingo bwaira maziso bedzi.

Imba yedu yekurara yaive yave imba yake yeurwere, imba yake yekutandarira, uye yekudyira zvakare zvese nekuva chimbuji. Vabereki vake vaive nechokwadi chekuti mwana wavo akaroyiwa saka zvaida n'anga. Zvakanga zviriri kunze kwekutenda kwangu saka ndakauya nechikonzero, chekuti imba yaive yehurumende zvekuti hapana munhu anogona kubvumidzwa kuita chero zvaanaGodobori, Tsikamutanda kana chiporofita chekuporesa. Tikazviita taigona kusungwa nemutemo. Saka vakabva vasarudza zvekutsvaga motokari yomutakura kuenda naye kuN'anga. Ndakavaudza pachena kuti paive pasina mari yekutsvagisa motokari. Chaive chokwadi chaivepo nekuti tainge tisina mari sezvo ndaive ndambotsvaga mota dzinodhura kuti Ken aende nekudzoka kuChipatara kunoongororwa kweMwedzi yakawanda. Paive nezvinhu zvinodarika chiuru zvaida mari pamusha. Mari dzechipatara dzainge dzakamirirwa, mishonga nezvimwewo. Zvakare ndaifanira kupa chikafu hama dzose idzi dzaigaroshanya. Hama dzaisaziva kuti kunodhura kuhaya mota. Muchokwadi vamwe vatyairi vetekisi vakanga vasina mwoyo minyoro. Dai vaiziva kana kuva nehanya nekunetseka kwandaiita kuti ndiwane chouviri. Vazhinji varidzi vemotokari ava vaive nefungidziro yekuti Vadzidzisi vaive nehupfumi hunofashukira, uye sezvo ini nemurume wangu tiri vadzidzisi zvakawedzera dambudziko rangu. Pane imwe nguva tayiita rombo rakanaka, apo shamwari yekubasa yaizvipira kutitakura kuenda kuchipatara pachena. Asi izvozvo zvakanga zvisiri zvinhu zvekutarisira kuti zviitike nguva dzose.

Pakupedzisira rufu rwomurume wangu rwakauya pashure pehondo inotyisa yakapedza chinhu chiri chose kubvira pamari kusvikira kusimba uye shingairo ne tariro yokurarama. Ini nemurume wangu takatanga kusangana paMidlands Teachers College. Chinove chikoro chevadzidzisi. Taka dhumana paboka rekuita mitambo yema drama. Takanga tasangana nyanzvi pamutambo zvekuti pese pataipihwa zvinzvimbo tiri vaviri paibuda chakanaka. Taka kasika kubva tava ne ushamwari nekuda kweizvozvo. Hatina kumbofungira kuti taizopedzisira taroorana. Izvi zvaka nyanya kukonzerwa nekuti ndakanga ndagara ndine mukomana ainzi Rex wandai fambidzana naye nechakare.

Mukomana wangu aishanda kumauto emuchadenga, kwaave ari mudzidzi wekubhururutsa ndege. NaRex, takanga tatanga se shamwari dzepa zvinyorwa zvetsamba, paayi dzidzira kuva mutyairi wendege achigara mhiri kwemakungwa ku Pyongyang. Mazuva iwayo chaive chidadiso kuva ne shamwari yaunonyorerana nayo tsamba ari mhiri. Izvi zvakaitika mushure mekunge nyika yedu yawana rusununguko. Nguva iyoyo taive tisati tonyanyo dyidzana nenyika dzeku mabvazuva. Ndino fungidzira kuti ndipo pazvaka tanga. Paaka dzoka kubva kunze kwenyika Rex akandiridzira runhare achikumbira kuti tionane. Kwakava kekutanga kusangana takatarisana mumaziso, taive tango jaira kuonana pa mifananidzo. Muchinda uyu aisave nerunako sezvaayi ratidzika pa mifananidzo yake yaayitumira mutsamba. Asi akanga asinga shoreke hake. Kusangana kwedu kekutanga kwakava nekaku sekenyedza mukatikati memwoyo zvekuti ndakanzwa mhodzi yangu yerudo ichimera pana Rex. Haikona kutaura! Paive negwenya rerudo zviru pachena uye isu takanzwirana mwoyo, hana dzedu dzikaroverana dzichiimba rwiyo, takatenda kuti rwaive rudo rwemandorokwati.

Wochizotarisa zvakaitika kana kuti nditi zvaka zoitwa naRex. Pandaka tanga kuti ndifungisise nezvemanzwiro erudo edu ekare aya, ndaka ona kuti zvandainzwa zvayiita serudo, kwaingova kutorwa mwoyo kwechiduku, ku tungana kwe mbudzi chaiko. Hwaive upenzi kana kuti kusaziva chinonzi hwaro hwerudo. Makambo onepi hushamwari hwakadaro hwe kudanana nemunhu wandaisaziva hunhu hwake uye ndayingo ona pa mifananidzo? Dzokonoko mototi tawira murudo, hezvi ndakazopotsa ndabhinyiwa, newandaiti mudiwa.

Savanhu vai gara kure ne kure taigara tichi nyorerana tsamba neku batana pa runhare. Gore rakatevera ndipo pandakano nyoresa kuMidlandsTeachers college kuti nditange chikoro. Sezvineiwo pakaita mukana Rex akatumirwawo muguta rimwe chete neni ne basa rake. Takafara chose, chakava chiratidzo chakanaka. Zvayi ratidza kuti takanga tanzi nevadzimu tiswedere pedyo tigoronga kuva pamwe chete zvaka nakisa. Takanga tava nemukana wekutandara patadira sezvo ndaiva mugari wepakoreji pasina mitemo yevabereki, zvaireva kuti taizove nenguva yekuronga upenyu hwedu. Ndaiwanza kuonana Rex pakupera kwesvondo uye pese pandaive ndisina zvidzidzo. Ndaisangana naye dzimwe nguva ku Officer's Mess Club, kwatayi mwira mwira nekudya tunonaka, taka sasana hedu. Mune zvimwe zviitiko, Rex aizondi shanyira pakati pevhibi, ayingo erekana abudikira asina kundizivisa. Se munhu wenyembe aityaira motokari yehurumende. Ndakaita kunge Muzvare chaiye, mwanasikana waMambo. Sezvo zvaive nemukurumbira kuonekwa uchifambidzana nemukomana aishanda basa repamusoro, uye asingafambe netsoka. Saka ndakava mumwe we vasikana vane rombo rakanaka vakanga vakapfimbwa neChikomba chakarongeka kudaro. Zvaiva zvakajairika pachikoro kunyomba vasikana vese vaifambidzana nevakomana vano timba pasi netsoka. Zvaitonyanyo shoreka kana mukomana aive mudzidzisi kana kuti mumwe wevadzidzi. Ndaiseka vamwe vasikana uye vamwe vangu vaive vachito rwadziwa negodo. Ndaingova nemakore gumi nemapfumbamwe uye ndisina ruzivo rwakanyanya nezveupenyu izvi.

Ndakazo woma mate mukana apo ndakaziva kuti chikomba changu chaive chamangwiza wekuita gumbo mumba gumbo panze panyaya dzerudo. Aitoita semunhu akatemerwa nyora dzechipfambi. Chakandi baya pamwoyo inhau yekuti aitozviita mawune asingambo katere kuti zvinorwadza mudiwa wake. Ndaka wanikidza kari kabhuku kaayi chengeta achinyora nezvenyaya dzake dzese dzevasikana vakasiyana siyana vaayi fambidzana nekuita bonde navo. Ayi chengeta tsamba kubva ku shamwarikadzi dzake dzose. Ndichiri kushamisika nanhasi ndikazvifunga kuti ayichengeta dutu retsamba idzodzo kuti azonodzi tsikisa kunzvimbo dzino unganidzwa magwaro here kana kuti? Aitoita se munhu ari pamujaho. Muchinda uyu akanga apindwa muropa ne rudo, zvekuti aigara akatakura bhegi remakondomu neku famba akazadza mamwe muhomwe dzake. Pandaka tarisana naye nezvenyaya dzake dzakawanda uye humhizha hwake huzere njodzi hwekusatya kuita bonde nevana vevanhu. Haana kuzvishora asi akatozvi rova dundundu achiti aingova munhu wenyama. Akatotaura kuti Munhurume ane zvaanoda mukufambidzana ne munhukadzi, zvino sanganisira kuita bonde. Akati iye, sezvo ndakasarudza kurega kuita bonde naye ikodzero yake kuri tsvaga kune vasikana vanoda. Haana kuratidza kuzvidemba zvachose kana kuda kusiya zvisarudzo zvake nemaitiro aka tsauka aya, uye asina hunhu. Akati ayi remekedza sarudzo yangu yokurega

bonde kusvikira tapinda mu svitsa tsvene. Asi akandikurudzira kuti ndisazvinetse sezvo akanga achiri ku gadzirira kundi roora. Akati panguva iyi hupenyu hwake hwe pabonde hahwaizo mira. Aitotaura hake pachena kuti acharega kuita zvechihure kana taroorana.

Weduwee! Ndipo pazvakandibata, ndakabva nda pepuka kubva muku putirwa ne rudo. Ndipo pandakabuda mu hukama hwaka wora hwacho. Aive chikara chisina mwoyo uye ndakaona kuti hungava hubenzi hwangu kuramba ndakaremba imomo nekuda kwemukurumbira wekunzi ndinodanana nemutyairi weNdege.

Ndakarwadziwa, ndikayedza kutsvaga rudo mumwoyo maRex asi hapana chandaka wana, kana chidimbu. Rex aive asiri munhu ane rudo, aive Jokirume. Ndichitarisa kumashure ndino shamisika kuti sei ndaisazviona, uye sei ndakatambisa nguva yangu ndakaremba pahukama ihwohwo kwe nguva refu. Zvichida hwaive hwana hudiki hwangu. Aive aine hutsinye. Mupfungwa dzake hapana chimwe chaayida pakufambidzana kunze kwebonde.

'Kana musingakwanise kundipa handingagare nenzara. Ndinofanira kuzvisunungura nekuwana bonde kune mumwe munhu, kusvikira tazoorana.' - Rex akazvitaura pameso pangu.

Handisi kunzwisisa kuti sei akanga akandpa mupfuhwira kudaro, ndayi ita se ndainge ndaka royiwa.

Ndakazo nyatso bengenuka ndikamuramba, zvamunoono kukurukura hunge wapotswa. Wakanga uri musi weSvondo masakati apo Rex akaedza kuzvimanikidza pandiri. Akanga angoerekana ahanduka kuita chikara chine hasha, maziso akatsvuka seropa. Kuita kurwerwa rute achiongorora chimiro changu kubva kubvudzi kusvika kutsoka. Ndaka vindinukawo zvine hukasha kupfuura zvaaitarisira.

Ndakanzwa rimwe simba randisina kuziva kuti rakabva nekupi. Ndakaona kuti ndaifanira kuzvidzivirira, ndakambofunga kuridza mhere asi ndaka kurumidza kuzvi dzora. Pfungwa iyi ndakairamba sezvo vanunuri vaizo bvunza kuti sei ndakanga ndazvi vharira mumba naRex paku tanga. Kana aizondibata chibharo vabereki vangu vaizoziva nezvenyaya iyi uye ndainzwa inzwi rababa vangu reyambiro munzeve dzangu, vachiti:

"Ndakaku tuma kuChikoro asi iwe wono sviko famba uchitsvaga zvikomba." -

Mashoko aBaba vangu ese ekundi panga mazano uye yambiro pamusoro peku koshesa chikoro akadzokorora mupfungwa dzangu. Ndakarwa seMvumba ndikanyudza mazino angu pamutsipa waRex, akabva anditsunhura pakarepo. Sezvo akange aedza kupinza nhengo yake zvenharo mandiri, ndakanzwa simba raSamson we mubhaibheri richindibata panguva iyoyo.

Akakatyamara akayedza kundi tyisidzira achituka zvineukasha, akandi bvunza kuti sei ndakanga ndamushanyira kana ndaisada zvebonde? Mubvunzo wake waive ne chiremerera zvawo, nekuti ndaive ndaita guyu rino fambira shiri.

Ndakati kwanyanu kuzvisimudza, ndokutora chikwama changu ndokubuda ndichimhanya, shangu ndakazopfekera ndatove chinambwe. Ndakanga ndakananga kunzvimbo yaikwirirwa michovha yekudzokera kuChikoro. Handina kuda kumbofunga kuti garazviya ndinochi siiwa nemotokari naRex, sezvaingogara zvichiitika rudo rwuchapisa. Ndakanga ndasunungurwa pashaya dzeGarwe. Rex aive asina hanya, raive Bhinya, mupengo uye munyengeri.

Ndichi svika paChikoro ndakanzwa kunge ndiri gamba. Ndakanga ndabudirira paku pedzisira, ndaifanira kuzvibvisa pahuipe hwe mhombwe. Nanhasi handina wandakaudza nezve tsekwende ye musi uyu, kana shamwari dzangu Annah naHilda vari murima. Ndaka zongo vaudza kuti ndainge ndasiyana neMurume

wemuchadenga. Vakashaya neremuromo. Ndakango vaudza kuti ndakanga ndisati ndagadzirira kuita mudzimai weMutyairi wendege. Vaifunga kuti ndakanga ndarasikirwa nemukana wakakosha seNdarama chaiwo, shuviro yemusikana wese yaive yekuve mukadzi weMutyairi wendege. Ndainge ndisisina basa nazvo uye ku furirwa nevezera rangu hazvaizombondi nyengerera panguva iyi. Ndainge ndazvipira nekuti ndaive ndapunyuka muchiitiko chakaipisisa chisingambo fanire kusangana nemusikana mukurarama. Nekuti dai ndakada kuteerera mashoko eshamwari dzangu gumisidzo yacho ndaizo batwa zvirwere zvaka siyana siyana zvepabonde chete. Nekungoda kunzi mukadzi waPilot. Hayewa kwete! Ndakanga ndisiri kudzika nenzira iyoyo. Ndakatsidza kuti handaizombofofa ndapinda murudo zvekare nyangwe zvodii. Ndakanga ndamboguta kudiwa, ngazvigare.

Mavhiki akatevera Rex akauya kuzo kumbira ruregerero kakawanda apo aiyedza kundidzora mugwara re rudo rwedu. Ndakasimba ndaka tsika madziro zvangu, ndichibva ndamuvharira panze pemwoyo wangu. Hapana pandaizove ndakapusa zvekuwira mumusungo mumwechete kaviri. Zvino sezvo ndaiziva mavara ake chaiwo ndakanga ndisiri kuzununguka. Ndakaona zvino kuti aingoda kuita gamba chete, aizondibvisa humhandara obva andirasa pasina nguva. Akanga atombondi tumidza zita rema dunhurirwa rekuti 'Mai Maria Musande' (zita reMhandara yemuBhaibheri) nekuti ndakanga ndaramba kurara naye.

Pandaka ona kuti zverudo zvaramba, ndaka zvinyudza mumabhuku ne basa rechikoro uye zvimwe zvakasiyana-siyana zvepa Chikoro, ndakajoinha kirabhu yemitambo yemaDrama kwandai pedza nguva yakawanda ndichibata nemusoro zvinyorwa uye kudzidzira. Nyaya dzemitambo yacho dzakanga dzichi nyorwa nemumwe wevarairidzi vedu. Takanga tine mumwe wevanyori yemitambo vane ruzivo ne mukurumbira mune zve kutungamira boka remaDrama. Umhizha hwemitambo ndiko kwaive kudya kwangu uye ndainakidzwa nazvo. Ndakanga ndaka sikwa zviri mandiri, ndaive ndakapinda mumitambo yakasiyana kubvira ndichiri mudiki kuchikoro. Handisi kuzvitutumadza saizvozo, asi ichokwadi chandinoreva kuti chipo chaive mandiri. Ndaka mira kakawanda pamberi pevateereri vakawanda nenhau dzemitambo. Panguva yekuita zvevitambo uku ndipo pandakasangana naKen, akazova murume wangu. Tose taida zve mafirimu uye taka kurumidza kubva tawirirana tikava shamwari. Aive mumwe wevakomana vaye vanonzi vanotaura zvisoma. Ndingati Ken aive munhu akanyarara. Takazo pedzisira tave tsika nditsikewo, ndokuzozivana kwataibva, zvino farirwa nemumwe, vehukama, ndakaziva kuti aiva nevanin'ina gumi nevaviri. Paku tanga ndaka zvitora sejee, asi chaive chokwadi chaicho. Ndainambo svotwa neku nyararisa kwake dzimweni dzenguva, asi ndaimu farira akadaro. Ndinopika kuti handichayeuki kuti ushamwari hwacho hwakatanga riini, uye sei kuti huve rudo. Chandai nyanya kufarira ndechekuti Ken aive nemutsa uye aiva munyoro. Takasvika pakuzivana, mhuri dzedu nezvizhinji.

Ndaingo onawo hushamwari hwedu sehwe nhando, nekuti ndaisa ziva kuchawira tsvimbo neDohwe. Pamwe kuita hushamwari nemunhu munyoro zvimwe zvezvinhu zvandaidawo kuvandudza upenyu, iri nzira yerudo rwechokwadi tichi enzanisa neRex.

Tisati taenda kure nenyaya yedu itsva. Pane chinhu chisina kujairika chakaitika chakabva chava chibingamupinyu.

Paiva ne Mudzidzisi wedu aive ari murume wechidiki, airatidzika uye akanaka ainge atondi farira, maiwee! Handizivi kuti uku kwaiva kutukwa here, kuropafadzwa kana kuti rombo rakaipa. Ndakanga ndichangotanga kugadzikana mune imwe nyaya yerudo naKen, saka chii manje ichi? Chii chandainge ndaita kuti ndiwirwe ne rombo rakaita seizvi? Ndakaita sendaisaona, kuti mudzidzisi vandifarira ndokuita se ndatsikirira nyaya yacho pasi. Ndaitya hukama murudo hwe Mudzidzi neMudzidzisi zvakanyanya. Ndaka tanga kunzvenga chero kusanganidzana naye mumaziso chaimo. Pese izwi rake parainzwicka mu Lecture Theatre pakudzidzisa zvidzidzo zvake. Vandinodzidza navo vakafunga kuti ndakanga ndaita rombo rakanaka apo rimwe zuva ndakasarudzwa naMr Jenami kuti ndizova unganidzira mabhuku ezvinyorwa zvebvunzo kubva kuvana vechikoro ndichi unza kuhofisi kwavo. Sezvineiwo ndakazvifarira ndikabvumirana nevandaidzidza navo kuti chokwadi ndakaita rombo rakanaka. Asi kahana kairovera kure

kure. Ndakanga ndotsemuka pakati penyika mbiri. Zuva rekutora mabhuku anebvunzo rakasvika ndakatora ndokuenda kuoffice kwake. Ndichisvika kuhofisi yake ndakaita sehwei iri kupinda munzvimbo izere mapere. Ndaka gogodza pamukova ndichibva ndanzi pinda, wanike ndatarisana naye Mudzidzisi wechidiki mutete aiva ari murefu, uye ari munaku. Nenguva isipi ndakanga ndava mumhinganidzo yemibvunzo kubvira paku bvunzwa zvekumusha kwangu, zvikoro zvandaka dzidza, vanin'ina hanzvadzi nezvimwewo. VaJenami vakazokumbira kupota tichionana munguva yaka faranuka. Handina kubvuma pachena kana kumuvimbisa chimwe chinhu. Ndinoyeuka ndichingo tendeuka ndakaomesa gotsi ndichibuda mukamuri roku bvunzurudzwa. Zvakaratidza kuti sekunyumwa kwangu uye pfungwa dzangu zvaive pachena kuti kwaive kurongerwa kupfimbwa. Hurongwa hwe Mudzidzisi hwakazo buda nenyaya yekuti tisarudze mumiriri wevana vechikoro mumwe chete, aizotambira zvichemo nekumiririra vamwe vana. Nokuda kwechimwe chikonzero mumwe mukomana watai dzidza naye ainzi Jeremiah, aka sheedzera zita rangu. Ndiwo matorero andakaita basa, zvakaita kuti kutiza kwangu hurongwa hwerudo hwaiteyewa ne Mudzidzisi kushaye basa. Ndakabva ndaitwa munyai pakati pevana neMudzidzisi. Chadiwa kuvana neMudzidzisi ndini ndai tumwa, zvimwe chetezvo neku vana. Ndakabva ndadzika midzi kugara muhofisi yava Jenami. Izvi zvaka simbisa kutanga kwe kudanana kwangu naMudzidzisi Jenami sezvo kuonana pedu tega kwakanga kwawanda, nyangwe zvazvo zvaindi rovesa hana. Pakanga pasina kana kuroverana kwehana pakati pangu na vaJenami. Rudo rwezu rwaive rwaka remera kudivi rimwe zvekuti ndaita semusungwa, kuita nhapwa chaiyo.

Nyaya yainge yavepo yaive yekuti, chero ndaizoda kunzvenga nyaya yerudo neMudzidzisi, ndaikauriswa nekufoiriswa zvidzidzo upenyu hwangu hwaibva hwamira. Zvaizoreva kukundikana, sezvo varairidzi vaive ne simba rose patiri, kunyanya vadzidzi vechikadzi. Dzaive dzisiri itsva, nyaya dzakadai dzaive dzaka jairika kuzvikoro zvevakuru. Uka ramba kunyengwa ne Mudzidzisi waikundikana mubvunzo. Ndakaita sendaive ndiri ku jeri reChikurubi. Hapana muporofita wandaida kuti andi yeuchidze kuti kana ndikango ramba rudo rwe Mudzidzisi zvaireva chinhu chimwe chete, kufoiriswa zvidzidzo.

Ndaisada kuwanikwa pa 'March Movement'. Iri raive izwi raishandiswa nevadzidzi muku nyomba vadzidzi vese vanenge vafoira kosi, uye aifanira kuuya kuzonyora patsva mumwedzi waKurume vamwe vachi gadzirira kupemberera kupedza zvidzidzo. Saka rainge risiri zita rino nakidza kusanganiswa mariri. Kuve mutambi wemaDrama kwandaive ndiri, kwaka kwanisa kubata Mr Jenami kumeso kuti vatende kuti taidanana, ini ndichi nyepedzera zvangu. Nyangwe zvakadaro, zvaindidya mumwoyo sezvo ndainge ndawonda uye hope dzisinga chauye. Zita ne mbiri yekuti ndiri kudhumanisa Mudzidzisi neMwana wechikoro yakanga yatekeshera nechivanze chechikoro kusvika muguta chaimo. Ndakava mumwe wevasikana vava vainzi vakatengesa miviri yavo kuti vawane zvibodzwa zvepa musoro muzvidzidzo. Ndainge ndave Mai Maria Musande vakaita sei? Nhau dzakanga dzichi tenderera paChikoro, kuzevezerwa kwezita rangu, muma hosteri, uye muma kirasi kana nemunzira kwaive kwanyanya. Hapana kupera nguva nekuti vaJenami vakabva vanzwa nezvazvo. Vakaviruka nehasha vachibva vaita kumerera tuma pundu twai onekwa nehekure. Vakandi deedza kuhofisi yavo. Maziso avo aive atsvuka nehasha kunge Gudo radya chiwirowiro. Vakandiyambira kuti ndisazviyedze zveku dhumanisa iye nemumwe munhu rume, kunyanya aritori mwana wechikoro. Zvaimu dzikisira kunzwa kuti ayenzaniswa neMwana wechikoro. Ndaka zviramba hangu nyorenyore ndika simbisa shoko rekuti ndivo vega vaitosvora maziso angu. Vakandi bvisa pamberi pavo, kuita kuninwa se nhunzi.

Hukama ahuna kupera sezvo Jenami aindida, asi paitoda imwe nzira yeku punyuka nayo zvachose. Akazvitenda asi akaenderera mberi achida kuti tigadzirise nyaya yedu tisimbise rudo. Zvichireva kuti taifanira kurara tose semu cherechedzo wekuti mhiko yedu ichiripo. Aihwa, bodo! hapana zvakadaro zvaizoitika ndiri mupenyu. Ko nekuda kwei varume vese vaive vaka fanana panyaya yekuda kutungamidza bonde? Ko sei vanhu vaviri vasingagone kungo danana vasingaite zvebonde? Chii chaive chakapinda vakomana ava vese? Aiva mashavi aibata vose here?

Ndakatanga kufunga kuti nei bazi re dzidzo yepa musoro rakapa vaDzidzisi ava simba rakawanda kudaro? Ndivo vanopakura zvidzidzo, kudzika bvunzo nekumaka bvunzo dzacho zvekare. Zviro kwazvo hupenyu hwedu huno fumurwa sezvo huchigara huri mumaoko avo, isu vana vechikoro. Basa revadzidzi raka kombere dzwa nesimba reku dokwairira rudo kwevadzidzisi.

Ndaka tsidza kuti handichada kudanana ne Mudzidzisi. Saka ndakagadzira nzira dzekuti ndisamuonezve, kungava kudhorobha kwa taichi sangana kana kupi zvako. Ndaito fanira kumu nzvenga zvachose. Ndakashaya hanya netutsamba twaaitumira kuti tionane. Akatorana neshamwari yangu Annah, ndokukumbira tsananguro yekuti sei taive tisisaonane kubudikidza netsamba. Akada mhinduro pasina kukundikana. Ndakamupa mhinduro nyoro yekuti ndainge ndiri mushishi yeku gadzirira bvunzo dzeku pera kwegore saka ndaisawanika nyore.

Ndakatura befu apo takanga tapedza kunyora bvunzo uye taifanira kubva pachikoro. Ndakanzwa kupombonoka neku fefeterwa seshiri. Ndainge zvino ndabuda muJeri. Ndakanzwa kufara se musungwa asunungurwa nguva yemutongo isati yakwana . Kunyange zvazvo kumba kwaimboita sejeri kare, panguva ino kwaiita se nzvimbo tsvene. Vabereki vangu vakanga vaine mitemo yakaoma zvikuru; vaisabvumira vana vavo kuti vashaike pamba pasina chikonzero chakanaka kana kugara kunze kwe ruzhowa kwasviba zuva ranyura.

Mumwedzi waNdira, gore rakatevera racho ndakaenda kunodzidzira kufundisa kwangu kune chimwe chikoro chesekondari. Mukomana wangu chaiye wepa mwoyo Ken, zvakango itikawo kuti akaiswa munharaunda iri pedyo nekwandaive pane chimwe chikoro chepa Mugodhi wezvicherwa. Zvakaita kuti rudo rwedu rwubudirire sezvo taiwanzo sangana patadira. Pese pandaiva pedyo naye ndaisava nekutya kana kuvhunduka kana kukahadzika sezvandaita pana vaJenami kana Rex bhinya. Ndainzwa sokunge ndakanga ndiri mudhuze nehama kana kuti shamwari. Ndainzwa kaku nyevenuka nekaku dziirwa kana ndiri pedyo naKen. Kwakange kwaperera mwedzi gumi apo ndakaona kuti ndaiva ndazvitakura, nyemba dzataidya naKen dzakanga dzazondi zvimbira mwanasikana. Oh mwari wangu ! Handina kunge ndamanikidzwa kana kumbunyikidzwa, zvakanga zvaitika mu munyorododo we mazirudo evaviri. Ndini here musikana uya aitya bonde zvakanyanya? Mutsvene akarinda humhandara hwake zvakasimba? Uye kuramba bonde kwenguva yakareba kudaro? Zvakaitika pana Mai Maria chakave chishamiso kwandiri. Hupenyu hwangu hwose hwakango erekana hwashanduka. Ken aive asiri mukomana aingozvi manikidza pane chero munhu. Nhapitapi yandainzwa pana Ken, ndaka gutsikana kuti izvi ndizvo zvinoreva rudo rwechokwadi.

Ndakatozo mbomisa zvechikoro kuti ndiyamwise mwanakomana wedu. Ini naKen takazoorana uye takava nemwana wechipiri mushure memakore mashanu. Muwanano medu mainakidza chose, kusvikira murume wangu azotanga kuvhevhetedzwa nevasikana vainyepera kuita sevatsigiri venhabvu. Vakapindura mufaro waive muwanano yedu ndokuwu gura-gura. Handizivi kuti vakaita sei chaizvo, kusvika pakuti murume wangu azofe neAIDS mushure mekurwara kwenguva refu. Zuva rangu rekuzvarwa rekusvitsa makore makumi matatu nerimwe rakauya mavhiki maviri mushure me kufa kwemurume wangu. Iye aingova ne makore makumi matatu neshanu bedzi, uye akanga ari pakati pekuita zvidzidzo zve Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics.

Iye zvino ndava nemakore makumi mashanu ekuberekwa uye handisati ndakwanisa kuroorwa zvekare. Zvinonetsa kureurura kune munhurume arikuku nyenga kuti ndine utachiwana hweHIV. Anotobva atiza kuita murambamhuru chaiwo. Ndinogona kuroorwa nemunhu ane utachiona hweHIV asi chandinotyanda ndechekuti anogona kuzoparadzwa nechirwere ichi. Chii chichaitika kumuchato wangu, ndogonzi Chirikadzi zvakare rwepiri? Ko kana murume asingadi vana vangu? Kutya kwangu kwandichengeta ndisina kuroorwa uye ndisina kumbo danana nemunhu kwe makore makumi maviri apfuura.

Ndino nyaradzwa kana vana vangu vachiita zvakanaka kuchikoro. Ndine rutsigiro rwaka simba kubva kuvana va amai vangu, vabereki uye shamwari. Handimbonzwa kuda kutanga imwe ngoro yeku netsana futi nemunhurume. Zverudo zvinondinetsa izvi, ini nda kwegura kudai. Ndava kumbo siyirawo vechidiki, vachine ropa rino mhanya mhanya. Chokwadi ndaka pfuura nemuku shungurudzika, kushushikana, hurwere, uye dzimwe nguva kutovhumuka, kuona zvinhu zvisipo. Kunyanya pandaka tanga ku ziva kuti ndave neutachiwana hwe HIV/AIDS.

Parizvino ndava kunyatsoziva kuti kuva neHIV hakusi mutongo werufu. Ikozvino ndinoshuvira kurarama kwenguva yakareba kuti ndipupure hupenyu padivi pevazukuru vangu nezvizukurubi Ndichiva rondedzera mafambiro andakaita pa hupenyu hwangu. Ndino namatawo kuti mushonga weAIDS uwanikwe ndisati ndasvika panzvimbo yangu yokupedzisira yekuzorora.

...magumo

## **My Sister's Keeper by Gaynor Paradza**

I am the eldest in a family of five. I was born in Marondera 4 years before my sister who was the third baby welcomed into the family in 1971.

By 2002, we had both left home and lived in the same city. I was married and my sister was living alone at a private school where she taught French and German. My sister loved running, tennis and her teaching. We always joked and teased each other.

My sister loved her pupils and the family of children that surrounded her. So much so that the children at the junior school called her aunt. The kids were always rushing to her and she obliged them by handing out lollipops from her never-ending supply. When I left to further my studies - she stepped in to mother my children.

Increasingly our relationship became strained as I felt my sister become short tempered and irritable with my parents and I. Attempts to engage her increased the tension. I fretted! I wanted my sister back. People put it down to sibling rivalry. I was not convinced.

February 2005 I was summoned to the trauma center. My sister was very ill from Alcohol abuse. We were advised to go to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I wanted my sister back so badly. I offered to accompany her to AA. After three AA meetings all of which my sister missed, I gave up. I did not recognise the terse person who made me walk on eggshells because of her temper.

As I waited for my sister outside a bank at the Sam Levy Village one day, I bumped into my husband's colleague. My sister pitched up and walked right past us. The guy remarked, "you know that lady, she is mad". He quickly revised his statement when he realised I had affirmed that the lady was my sister "she is extremely clever isn't she". I was gutted. The person who carried my sister's name did not resemble her at all. I felt so sad.

An incident I remember so painfully when I raised my concerns about my sister with our dad. My father responded by saying "If your sister removed her clothes - no-one would be surprised". My dad's words ring in my ears to this very day.

Eventually we lost our parents and I decided I owed it to my parents to rescue my sister from the volatile nervous and unpredictable person she had become. Increasingly her nieces and nephews that she adored were no longer comfortable around her.

Calls from concerned friends about my sister's mental and physical health increased. My sister insisted she was fit and ran another charity race and got the t-shirt to prove it.

I was not convinced. In my desperation. I went to Zimbabwe I paid a dermatologist and asked him to advise her to stop drinking. I called several other doctors she was seeing to find out what was going on. When my sister found out, she threatened to sue the doctors with breach of doctor-patient confidentiality. I pleaded with her employer to suspend her from work so I could convince her to join me in South Africa. I called people in the school community and offered to pay them to cook and deliver meals to her. I tried to engage her friends who either spurned me or cooperated and were labelled "Gaynor spies". Our relationship was contentious as my sister told me to "fuck-off and mind my own business!"

Eventually her employer put her into rehab here in South Africa. I visited my sister in rehabilitation every Sunday afternoon for three months. She talked about other patients and said nothing about her problem.

Every Sunday as I drove home from the centre I tried to diagnose my sister from the bits of evidence I gathered during our increasingly strained interactions. Red palms, itching shins and loss of balance. I was beside myself.

I managed to visit my sister's place in her absence and rummaged through her stuff to get my sister back! I found several hundred bottles and bottles of medication. I googled the stuff. I flew back to Johannesburg knowledgeable and defeated and shared my knowledge with my siblings.

After rehab, my sister spurned my offer to host her and returned to her beloved school in Zimbabwe. Our whatsapp exchanges consisted of her asking after my welfare daily, advising me about the approaching cold front, and power cuts. I was amused but not convinced - at least the hostility was gone.

On 29 June, my son's birthday, I received a call that my sister had suffered a stroke and was hospitalised in Zimbabwe. She did not make it to the next day. As I went through her stuff and diaries from rehab, I found out that my sister had been unwell since 1995. From 1994 – 2015, 21 years alone and so very worried yet she was amongst family and friends. It broke my heart that faced with the stigma she had taken up alcohol to cope. She survived like this until 2015 during which time she completed a couple of marathons, several half marathons and innumerable 5 and 10-kilometer runs.

I never got my sister back. I gained new insight in negotiating relationships. I learnt that one does not always have to know what is going on in order to support someone.

Dear Readers - please be sensitive to people around you especially those manifesting unpredictable behaviour. The jokes, the comments about people weight, the side-eye when people cough- we should stop. Ours should be the task to provide a safe and non- judgmental space where people living with HIV and AIDS can feel protected, accepted and safe enough to disclose their status.

To the Medical Doctors- the psychological impact of HIV and AIDS on the affected cannot be over emphasized. By its very nature, the condition requires that the affected are supported and kept safe. This includes mobilising family structures into the circle of treatment. It is not fair to expect an infected person to carry such an overwhelming burden. We need to revisit the Hypocritical Oath and all the confidential clauses.

Souls are fragile- handle with care!

### **Gaynor Paradza Bio**

Gaynor Paradza holds a PhD in Law and Governance (Wageningen) and an MSc in Rural and Urban Planning (University of Zimbabwe). She is a Land Governance expert with more than 15 years' experience in capacity development, research and policy development in relation to land tenure, gender mainstreaming, rural and urban development planning, local, government administration and management, agriculture value chain analysis, research design and analysis, and publication on land and agrarian issues and livelihood issues. Gaynor has experience in international national, provincial and local level government in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dr Paradza has managed regional policy programmes and disseminated information through advocacy and extensive participation in conferences and publications.

## **The Surviving Widow by Mai. Juju**

I was married a virgin and it was a blissful union. We settled down well and blessed with a beautiful daughter.

That is when I started to notice my husband's strange behavior, but nothing bad happened. I was convinced that he was having an affair with another woman as I had come across text messages on his mobile phone, indicating that he had a number of girlfriends.

I am now a 40-year-old Widow.

I found out I was HIV positive after I became pregnant with my second child, in 2008 when I gave birth and the baby died soon after.

I decided to go for a blood test as I had a strong suspicion that my husband was still having sex with other women.

When I tried to convince my husband to be tested, he insisted that he would not go for a blood test. He was arrogant about it, bragging that his kind was of the royal blood and of the Eland totem, hence very healthy. We went on without discussing the issue for a whole year, while tactfully trying to get my partner to understand but he was adamant.

I tried to remind him of the importance of knowing where we stand on the issues surrounding HIV infections, but he just bragged that he was tough like a stallion and his blood was pure.

I tried to encourage him to have protected sex, but he would have none of it.

In 2010 my husband became seriously ill and later died. I was heartbroken, and felt very much exposed.

In the middle of it all, I really knew that my partner had been taken away by the pandemic (AIDS).

The death of my husband left me in the lurch, so to speak.

Once bitten twice shy. I looked forward to the solace of my husband's death, but I had no idea I was soon to get the shock of my life. I stood accused of witchcraft, not literally but I was being accused of infecting my husband with the HIV virus due to my purported infidelity. Thus, I was labelled a killer, a witch, and other ugly names. I was also standing accused of wanting to further infect my Babamukuru (you shall read more about the issue of my Brother in-law). Some of my in-law relatives were already convinced that witchcraft alone had taken my Man. The other lot, who are the majority, were and some still believe the theory that I am to blame for the demise of my husband. They argued that nothing else would have taken him away, as he was from an invincible set of genes (Eland totem) and he was a strong man.

Shortly after the death of my husband, I began to realize that the witch-hunting gimmick was not for some stranger or enemy of the clan. It actually was directed at me.

I saw it in the attitudes of many in-laws. Hatred and animosity was fully turned to me, the widow. If the in-laws had been angry at and ignored me, the Widow, but embraced the orphan, then definitely the story would have been different. I would have been left without any guilt. It did not turn out as I had anticipated. It was a rude awakening and I learnt the hard way. My daughter and I had been shoved into the fiery furnace.

We were left miserable and desperate. My only child needed to go to school, eat, dress, and have a place to stay.

As I mentioned above, the in-laws continued to hide behind a finger. They did not want to find out the truth so that they would admit being wrong. Instead, they accused me of bringing the HIV virus into my home. They accused me of murdering their son. This is a tragedy that I never wish to see myself or any woman enduring. Being stigmatised after losing the love of your life.

Our men do what they do outside the home and bring the virus that causes AIDS. Because his black wife is beautiful, so she is a prostitute. Because his wife is light skinned, with fair skin, she is the one who brought the disease into the house. They make a big deal out of it, without seeking the truth or asking you to understand what you are going through. I had to be told in full by my late husband's friends that he behaved like a bull on seeing anything wearing a dress. However, these words are not spoken at the right time. Some of his relatives knew about the deceased's tendency to have casual sex, but no one ever wanted to give that evidence, during the funeral. In our culture, it is said that only the good deeds about our dearly departed, must be spoken. (Wafa Wanaka).

I ask! When is the appropriate time to speak about dangerous and reckless behaviour? Is it that time when we stand up and testify about the deceased at the funeral? No! The best time to start is when a person is not sick; in the gym teach them the pros and cons of protecting themselves from HIV. In fact, HIV/AIDS sensitization should start at Primary school and in all spheres of life.

The best time to start is to encourage your partner, a relative, a friend, or a neighbour to go for a blood test and stay informed. One of the worst times in life is when your partner fails to understand or accept that there is a global pandemic, and that it is transmitted in a variety of ways, including unprotected sex. If that happens find a mediator quickly so that either of you will not lose your life. It is even better to go to the police if your partner refuses to accept that we are HIV positive. Because that person can put others at great risk or even kill many innocent people. That person cuts his/her life short. The family is left devastated. That person leaves his or her family in the lurch.

If only I had done the right thing, my second child would still be alive. The father of my children would have been alive, to say the least. We would still be friends with each other reminding each other to take ART pills. Let us continue teaching others about the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Relatives of the deceased often ignore the truth. Pretending to consult a Traditional Healer (Gata), to find out what the cause of death was, yet they will be discussing the Widow or Widower behind his back, how he infected the deceased. Hypocrisy. In some instances:

'The witches and wizards are accused of being the culprits and the cause of a person's untimely death.'  
In my case, I was the one obviously labelled witch, in my infant's death in 2008. Yet it was a pregnancy without medical protection as I was in the dark then. I knew very little about the HIV virus. Had I known I could have protected my unborn child.

Actually, I heard later through rumours that my Husband had led a risky sexual life by having casual sex with various women, especially those who came to his workplace while he was managing a Filling Station/Petrol Station, to get their cars refueled. Those days as you all know we had a fuel crisis in Zimbabwe we could go for a week or two without fuel. Because he was the man in charge of the fuel business, at the Filling Station it became easier for him to find two or three women desperate for fuel. They would not have to worry about following a long queue that could take two weeks to be served.

After all the relatives left, I was left with a child who was starting her first grade at Primary School in 2011. That same year the HIV virus overwhelmed me and I became so weak that I could not leave home and go out to work. Cash for all the basics including School Fees and food began to dwindle, so did childcare funds.

In short, I was now found wanting, to the point where I started to sell household items from time to time selling for a living. I had a younger sister who was staying with me at that time. She was in form 3 at a tender age of only 15years. The girl suddenly was forced into becoming a Carer; she was now caring for her elder sister, and a minor niece, at the same time my Little sister also was supposed to go to school. She became a Head of the family as AIDS incapacitated me. HIV threw her into the deep end. She suddenly became a Household Head, as I could not even comprehend, if my daughter had eaten, whether she was going to school and which sessions, or when she was supposed to be back. I was totally lights out, not even familiar with my surroundings. I was on the verge of death. I had lost weight. I have always been a courageous person but during that time, I was overwhelmed by the illness. I was in a state of Depression.

My child and my sister were the only ones I frequently worried so much about especially if I were to die, who would look after them? I was at my lowest point in life and I was almost giving up. At some point, I would even want to write a last Will. That is how this journey of HIV /AIDS carried me. I would actually surprise myself by waking up alive.

The days went by, and we came to a point when my sister was supposed to write the O' Level exams. Her brother in-law was gone; our mother too had passed on earlier. My daughter always asked me, when her Father would be back? As young as she was she had no idea what death was all about.

As a Christian, I continued to lean on the Church for God's intervention, because life had let me down. I was failing to visualize a situation where I would ride again and be fit. I cried mostly for my Daughter that she would be left with no one when I left to meet my Creator.

The thing that bothered me the most was the lump in my throat. I looked at my late Husband's relatives who were accusing me of infecting their son with the disease, so if that is what they rebelled against. Why were they not concerned with his daughter who was an innocent soul? What was her crime?

That is when you realize that maybe if this little Girl was a boy, it would have been a different story. Discriminating against the girl because of her gender perhaps. It is also a common fact that maybe they assumed that she could infect them because people living with HIV suffered from a lot of stigma due to lack of information.

I was now worried that they cared less for me because I had not given them a boy child to be Heir as per our culture. In another dimension, I thought I was discriminated due to the fact I was a Makoti who is infected. The Sarapavana (chaperone - one who was left to care for the family) had also neglected his duties that are anchored on ensuring the wellbeing of the orphaned child. Of all the people, the Sarapavana pained me as I slowly faced death. Even though the issue surrounding the Sarapavana, is to help and see that, the orphan is well. My daughter was discriminated against because I, her mother, was infected. No relative would want to walk to our house, or call and ask how the young daughter was doing.

I came to realize that this hereditary practice of choosing a Chaperon (Sarapavana) for the Widow, only applies on Widows without the HIV virus.

I was in my late 20's, which made me quite appealing to have a Chaperon installed. Some of my peers were not yet married. Many Sarapavanas prefer young Widows as some lucky Chaperons end up having the Widow as a wife. That is normal in our culture. In this era, though the legacy of a Sarapavana is no longer encouraged because of the diseases but for me I have suffered to the point of wishing that my Sarapavana were active.

It was a very painful period for a young Widow, but no man or woman would want to be inherited by someone who you really know has an HIV positive status in the face of this AIDS era. Gaining the knowledge and time and accepting that it is the normal life of taking pills will help you to avoid depression, which will give you physical health.

Forgiveness was another lesson I learnt in my painful life. I kept holding on to the anger I had over my late Husband. He brought the virus into our young home, but I later realized that it was not a matter of playing the blame game but about looking ahead, taking courage (taking ARVs), eating nutritious food, relieving stress in life and returning to your original healthy body, and maintaining it.

I was at some point very thin eaten up by both the disease and my bitterness. I could easily fit in to my child's boxer shorts. I became very pale, and my eyes were white and dehydrated. My hair was thinning away and my mental health dwindling. I had one point of focus though, God. The Church played a pivotal role as they kept praying and encouraging me through counseling and visits. The women of the church would strengthen me, after every visit or phone call. Some friends and my sisters stood by me - blood is thicker than water. If my sister chooses to speak on her own, what she went through in looking after me then I would be grateful because I may be understating her real emotions. Had it not been for these people I am mention here, you could not even be reading this article. You could have got it in past tense from her.

To this day, I do not know what my daughter was going through at that young age, I do not know if it is right for a little girl to experience such in life, to be neglected by your father's relatives because your mother is thought to be the one who infected your Dad.

I also do not know what she was going through in her mind or how she felt about why I could not go to her father's relatives, why she did not have many clothes to wear, or why her life was suddenly poor. In a child's eye, as a young person, there is also the anxiety that occurs, not knowing how she took it. She only had two pairs of shoes. The only pair of school shoes were so tight she was walking with a limp, and the other pair of shoes were reserved for Church, which had peeled off most of the upper skin so that the shoe polish would not even stick. The only formal dress she had was actually a uniform for the Sunday School Church Choir. For a little child the difference from us adults when it comes to clothes is you can wear it for years if you handle it well. Now when it comes to kids they grow fast so much that you can be left with a dress that is too short or tight due to rapid growth. The baby was growing bigger, the clothes were getting smaller, and the money to buy some was scarce.

At school, she could not even mingle well with others because of the lack of food, which made her friends shun her.

Life is easier in rural areas than in the urban set up. The thought of moving back to our rural home once crossed my mind, but the actual relocation fee was in vain because there was a huge debt for the house we were living in.

At school, my daughter liked to play tennis but the club needed money for her to be allowed to play. That money was not available on the shoestring budget we were on because you could see that if you gave it to her she would spend a week skipping school as that would eat into her bus fare.

Sometimes she missed lessons because of expulsion due to late payment of school fees. As for the bus fare, I would place her on my lap so she would not have to pay. That way, we made sure that she would pay bus fare only on her way home in the afternoon.

As she grew older, it became embarrassing for her to accept being made to sit on anyone's lap.

These are some of the worries that plagued me as I lived as an infected Widow.

Going with other children to see important places with amazing wonders, was a luxury my Child never experienced, she only saw these places on Television or in a dream like monsters.

To find out for sure how much or deep my Daughter grieved over the loss of her father, would need us to ask her in detail.

Similar situations also haunted my young sister as she sometimes missed lessons especially whenever she was short of cash to buy sanitary wear.

Sometimes I was so sick that the children slept on empty stomachs. By the time my sister was in Form 4, she had seen it all in terms of deep poverty. To make matters worse she was now prone to abuse if at all she was to cross paths with vultures. She would sometimes receive food handouts from her boyfriend. The boy had seen our plight as someone who occasionally came home, to check on his partner. When he saw my condition, he felt sorry for me and told his relatives. He came with a packet of rice or sugar, and some other food he could get, from time to time.

One lucky day in 2012, I bumped into one of my brother-in-laws in the city of Harare, the deceased's cousin. When my husband passed away, my in-law was out of the country. Therefore, this had caused the drifting and loss of contact between him and me. We had always been so close. We exchanged numbers as he promised to come and visit especially to see our daughter.

He later called and I gave him directions to our new lodgings.

I never trusted his word as I was still convinced that all my in-laws had the same attitude of stereotyping my situation. He however surprised me by keeping his promise. He immediately brought hope to my daughter's future as he paid for her Tennis Club joining fees. I even saw the glimmer of hope in my daughter's eyes.

A Miracle Happened.

In 2013, I finally found a boyfriend but it did not go well because he quickly disappeared to Mozambique as soon as I fell pregnant.

I later gave birth to a bouncing baby boy who is HIV negative. The miraculous part of my life is that my partner was HIV negative, yet he did not contract the virus and that the baby too was safe. My new partner ran away as he was scared and confused. He wondered how he would manage to cope with someone on her way to the grave, so to speak. Someone on ARV treatment. What would his relatives say if they became aware of my HIV status?

When we had sex we did not plan on it, it just happened. You know what happens in a relationship, I conceived during the first time we had sex.

Then I believe my dear beloved partner freaked out, and became more concerned about how things would work out, and what his relatives would say about it. It just so happened that my boyfriend was lying that he loved me with all his heart. Because I made it very clear to him both my HIV status and being on ART tablets. However, for reasons best known to him he started dodging me and finally just vanished.

Pregnancy does not stop growing; when it does, it immediately evokes the urge to prepare to become a mother. However, to me a prepared and orderly mother needs a Father-to-be who is organized. When it came time to register the man was slippery, like an Eel.

My in-law noticed that I was stressed, and easily getting agitated. Losing my temper became like a norm furthermore I had not yet registered the pregnancy to keep the unborn safe.

I tried to conceptualize what I had done wrong that a man who had promised me a blissful matrimony should leave me in limbo. It was easier for me to talk to my in-law about my feelings, as he was an impartial listener. He was the one who really encouraged me to tell this new partner my state of health. He even thought that if I told the truth to my sweetheart he would accept me and we would build a home and stand in the truth. Little did we know that the person we spoke to would soon begin to grind his teeth, wake up, and run away.

By the fifth month of gestation, the would-be Father was completely uninterested.

I sometimes cried myself to sleep in despair as to where I would get the Money to register the pregnancy. Do not forget that delays in registering the unborn in the womb put them at risk of becoming infected with the HIV Virus. That was one of the things that worried me most. That, I was to give birth to a Childless Father, scared me beyond reason. If he was to be born without a father close by, and then came out infected he would have multiple problems. I was in a fix.

As if my brother in-law read my mind, he came with a surprising gift of \$25. The exact amount needed for registration of my pregnancy.

I was amazed at how my boyfriend fled to Mozambique and then buried his head in the sand beach somewhere in Beira. He sent nothing forth, not a penny.

A Greater Miracle Followed.

Even today, when I close my eyes I can still visualize it. I saw my brother-in-law come in and I pretended to smile but you just know that when a smile comes sincerely it does have a way of communicating the same. Mine was just from the cheeks that were wet with tears. I had just wiped away my tears, so the smile was just like a dog's smile.

My Baba Mukuru (in-law) suddenly blurted out that I was to register the pregnancy at Warren Park Clinic the next day.

After that, I wanted to make a fuss about how, on earth was he talking about registration, knowing fully well that rentals were in arrears. I had just finished a meeting and had agreed with the property owner so that I was to stop using two rooms, and move my belongings in to one room. I had reached that point due to the inadequacies of the little, money I was earning part-time in innovative endeavors that included finding wares to sell including mobile phones and doing all sorts of odd jobs that arose in the city of Harare.

To my great surprise, my BabaMukuru handed me \$25. I will never forget that moment. Nevertheless, know this, the tears were about to roll down. I just found myself stifling the urge to cry, and I felt so brave because Babamukuru did not insult me on my unplanned Fatherless pregnancy so why should I cry? It was much better to be brave and fight this battle to the best of my ability. From that day on, I felt the urge to love my pregnancy knowing that the Baby would be born free of infection. It cemented the earlier position as I stated, he was indeed born HIV negative.

It is not easy to meet people like my Babamukuru in life, men who understand that everyone deserves support whether they are HIV positive or not.

Many people living with HIV eventually lose their lives because of a lack of support. I just thank God that I found some people whose names I have not mentioned here, who have stood by me for over ten years of living with the virus. There are people whose love has always been flowing. Our families have different attitudes towards HIV/AIDS; I do not blame all those who discriminate against others because of their HIV status. Many out there do not have enough information on HIV/AIDS when we look at it.

When I became pregnant, my late husband's relatives did not take it well. Some began to label me a prostitute and that I was responsible for my husband's death. This hostile attitude emanated from, the fact Babamukuru was a Good Samaritan trying his best to help the unborn baby and me. Rumours started going around that Babamukuru was responsible for impregnating me. They never put it into perspective that it was now three years after I became a Widow. No, they did not look at that.

What pained me most was that they were specialists in grapevine yet no one bothered to remember the welfare of the orphan. An Orphan with only one dress suitable to be worn in church. A dress, which was only a Sunday school uniform for the Choir. Not once did they bother to fend for her or send a pencil to use at school.

I became very frustrated because the information that was going round about the whole scenario was painful to comprehend, as it was pregnant with falsehoods. We tried our best to explain to people the truth, but no one understood.

I thank God that my Babamukuru did not give up and stood by me throughout to an extent that he spoke to his cousin who arranged for my daughter to be on a scholarship. Boy! Was I happy.

The problem of finding school fees soon ended because the well-wisher adopted and carried that burden, which was the greatest boulder on my shoulders then. The small amount of money I was earning also began to improve my health. Because if you are on a course of taking ARV pills, nutrition is indeed key. I had gotten used to taking my medication every day regardless of the unavailability or lack of food. I gained a lot of confidence as I aimed to prove all who doubted my recovery that God is in control of human life. It gave me so much hope that I was determined and focused like a Lioness on the hunt for a better life for my children and younger sister.

My sibling was ahead of me if we talk of the zeal, courage and hope. She had come a long way, as she took care of me when I was incapacitated. I used to wonder how she pulled it off, she simply was an angel. To say the least.

Sometimes I was so sick so much so that, I realized it traumatized both my daughter and my young sister.

I was so depressed that at some point it got so critical, I contemplated going back to another. Imagine how my little sister would find time to listen to the teachers at school, fearing that I might find my roots. My fears on my sister's academic performance were confirmed as it turned out that on her a 'level exams, she failed, dismally.

The days when I got sick, I was still not on the ART. My CD4 count was then tested and it was found to be at a critical level of 12. At the very least, it meant that my immune system was severely depleted. The virus had almost white washed me to extinction. Thank God, I am writing this memoir.

The main thing to learn about living with HIV is that in marriage, women are prone to marginalization and they are easily stigmatized and abused by their husbands and in-laws without any control over the degree of abuse. It can easily take someone to the grave. Many have failed to live to tell the story, especially those who lived in the era beginning past decade.

When people hear that you have a disease like Covid-19, they help you with many ways to cure yourself, or at least combat the scourge. You will never be scolded or be labelled a murderer, a witch/wizard if you infect your spouse with Covid-19. Yet the witch/wizard label is common where HIV is concerned.

If a couple experiences an HIV infection perpetrated by the husband's risky behaviour, and it so happens that he is the first one to die. The surviving widow is in for it. Several courts and tribunals are set-up by the in-laws; some virtual courts are set-up via the waves and electronic media defaming her name.

The whole clan gangs up on you. They treat you as if you deliberately planned ways while seated of taking a variety of substances, then putting them in a pot and manufacturing the HIV virus and making sure that your spouse got plenty enough more than yourself. Hence his demise, before you.

Why not treat Covid-19 the same? Why were women who infected their husbands with the novel coronavirus never abused for it?

In some cases, a young person comes in with the virus (Covid-19) and infects the whole family resulting in some deaths.

It is quite clear that HIV / AIDS is treated differently in the community compared to any other disease we have ever encountered.

I just pray that:

Firstly:

When the HIV infects one of you in your marriage, there is no need for blame game.

Let us not look for a witch. Let us fight it together in harmony. It is so destructive to surviving children that widows and widowers are often left to fend for themselves when one mate dies.

Secondly:

Let us fight the spread, and let the community know what the HIV virus is all about and what can be done to make a person live longer like Wadzanai Garwe and others including me. How together we can avoid the infection/reinfection.

Thirdly:

Let us face it - most brochures go straight into the bin.

Fourthly:

Let us learn to forgive each other in marriage when someone brings HIV/AIDS. The sooner we forgive, the easier it gets to slip out of the denial stage, which gives us the advantage to survive more positively for more than 20years.

However, this does not mean I condone immorality, risky and bad behavior. Hence, also it means that unprotected sex with an infected partner is not the only way that leads to transmission. I encourage everyone to learn the different ways of contracting HIV infections, to guard against self-infection.

Fifthly:

For those who are in love but in a discordant affair where one of you is living with HIV. Continue to protect yourself but do not divorce. Stick by one another no matter how bad it is. Nowadays with PREP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) there are pills that couples take if they want to get pregnant or have sex, they will not be infected. Learn more about living with HIV. Only then will no one always hold the conscience in his or her hands for fear of being infected with HIV. When you love each other sincerely, it will improve your partner's health and emotional well-being. Because God is love. Once a person is loved, he or she will be happy, because he/she will not give up and will live with so much hope.

Sixthly:

In any case, you who are infected should persevere in living with hope. Find family and friends who encourage you in a non-judgmental way. Seek God and find joy in heaven, for man cannot do it. Take your pills; do not stop every day on time.

In conclusion, I would like to say to all the spouses who were abused but are still alive, stay strong. Educate people in your community; including all those on social media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and others, that HIV does not kill, and it is not like the Covid-19 yet, you treat it unfairly. So let us support our family and friends living with HIV/AIDS. Any person can become infected so we should not laugh or hate one another. Don't be discouraged, no matter how much you get bullied, work with those who want to work with you, choose true friends, because those who protect and promote their folks will never lose hope.

To my fellow PLHIV, do not stop taking the ARVs no matter what.

### **Mai Juju Bio**

Mai Juju is a caregiver

## Zvairwadza Vehukama Neshamwari na Mai Tee

Handizive pekutangira nyaya iyi asi, ndichazama.

Rwendo rwangu ne HIV/AIDS rwakatanga 1988. Ndaive ndiri mwana wechikoro ndiri mugwaro rechitatu (Form 3). Mudzidzisi wedu we Samhu(Mathematics) aive mubvakure ari muchena. Mabharani we pa chikoro chekumusha kwedu aive munhu watai yemura takatarisira kukurawo tigobudirira saiye. Aive Musikana ane runako rwunonwisa mvura. Aigona kupfeka achigarwa nezvipfeko zvekuti musikana wese wechidiki aitarisira mabharani uyu pamusoro nekumuyemura uye kushuvira kuzovewo saiye.

Mabharani wechidiki uyu akazo danana ne mudzidzisi we chichena zvinove zvaishamisira. Mabharani ivava vaisvisvina chirungu sezvo vaive vakaita mukana wekuve vakadzidza kuzvikoro zvaive kuGuta guru reHarare. Rudo rwavo vaviri ava rwakadadisa sezvo chaive chinhu chinodadisa kudanana nemurungu, mazuva acho kare ikako.

Zvakazondi batabata apo musikana iyeyu akafa nechirwere che shuramatongo. Akanorwarira Harare akazouya atove mubhokisi rezvitunha. Chakazoniyanya kundityisa ndepandakanzwa kuti akarwara zvakaipisira zvekudonha nyama kubva mumusoro wake, zvakaita kuti chitunha cha Mabharani chiuye chakaputirwa mumapepa aya anonanauka akaiswa pedyo nemoto, uye hapana akazombo tenderwa kumuona asati avigwa. Patsika dzedu, vanhu vanotarisa kuwonekedzana nemufi saizvozvo.

Ndakabaikana ndikazvidya mwoyo ndika vhunduka panguva imwechete. Ndipo pandaka sangandzana maziso neShuramatongo. Makanga mave mugore ra1989. Ndakadamba kunaMwari kuti chirerwere chakadai chisapindewo mumhuri yedu.

Ndaive ndiinemakore gumi nematanhatu ndiine mukaka pamhuno. Hapana zvaizivikanwa pamusoro pe HIV /AIDS.

Hapana chinorwadza sekuti munhu waunoyemura ne kushuvira kuti ugovewo mutsoka dzake afe rufu rwakadaro. Sevanasikana vekumaruwa taito yemurawo mabharani iyeyu.

Mundangariro ndaive nemibvunzo yakawanda ndichingoti: Nhai Mwari chirwere rudzii ichochi? Zvaityisa. Hapana zvataiziva nezvechirwere ichochi.

Ndakazo shivirira hangu ndikaita sendave kukanganwa nezvazvo. Ndakazokwanisa kunyora rugwaro rwechina(Ordinary Level) ndikabudirira hangu.

Pachikoro pandaizidza ipapa paive naSekuru vangu vaiveMudzidzisi. Vaive Sekuru pakuti taive vavakudzani.

Sekuru ivava taiwanzo famba tese musi wechishanu wegawega pakuenda kumba sezvo vaigara, pachikoro vozoenda kumba kumhuri pakupera kwesvondo. Taifamba hedu nyaya dzichitsva.

Panguva iyoyi ndipo pandakanzwawo shungu dzekuda kuita mudzidzisi ndicheyemura basa raiitwa naSekuru. Ivo vaidzidzisa magwaro epamusoro(Secondary) iniwo ndakazonoita mudzidzisi we magwaro ekutanga (Primary).

Mugore ra1990 ndakazo wana basa rekudzidzisa ndisati ndadzidzira basa racho kuti ndive nyanzvi. Mazuva iwayo vadzidzisi vaiwanikwa vachiita vashoma, saka wese aida hake aigona kuti akangopasa

zvadzidzo zve O'Level kana A'Level, otonotsvaga basa rekudzidzisa. Ndaive nemakore gumi nesere ukezvarwa bedzi. Mugore ra 1991 ndakazo wana nzvimbo yekudzidzira basa \*rehudzidzisi.\*

Makore, iwayo hapana zvizhinji zvataiziva mayererano nechirwere cheShuramatongo kana kuti Mukondombera. Taingoziva kuti kune HIV yaizove AIDS, zvaireva kuti wese anayo aiguma nekurwara zvakaipisira obva afa.

Auxilia Chimusoro, ndiye munhu akazoto rerutsa kutya kwangu kwese, paakauya kuGweru Technical Teachers College tiri pachikoro, semushamarari wezve chirwere ichochi akatsanangura zvizere nekupa dzidziso pamusoro pezvaka dzikadzika zve chirwere che Shuramatongo.

Mushure mechidzidzo, chakakosha ichi ndakazo tanga kuchizivawo kuti kune zvirwere zvinobata munhu ane utachiwana hweHIV kusanganisira chirwere chinonzi Shingles.

Ndisati ndawana ruzivo muna 1991 ndaiona munhu wese sekuti ane utachiwana. Mazuva iwayo varwere vaifamba vachionekera urwere, taiva shevedza nemadunhurirwa kuti makuva anofamba. Taizviita mukusaziva.

Ndaiita sekuti ndiri chivhitivhiti (CCTV) chinongoona, vese varikufamba vaine mucherechedzo weurwere hweAIDS. Izvi makarekare zvaitika kuti vanhu vairwara vachifamba, zvinova zvakazomiswa nekuda kwe kuuya kwakazoita maARV.

[4/5, 14:54] Mai Piki net1: Auxilia akandipa tariro, nekuti taive tisisina kana tarisiro yekuzova nemishonga inobatsira pasi rose, mudambudziko reDenda reHIV/AIDS.

Mazuva iwayo munhu aipfuura mumugwagwa achizvifambira asi achiratidzika kuve ndonda nechirwere zvekuti taimuti iguva rinofamba.

Kuuya kwaAuxillia kuGweru, achisvikotaura nezve upenyu hwake pamusoro pekurarama neutachiwana, kwakandipa muono mutsva uye chidzidzo chikurusa mayererano nezve denda irori. Auxilia aitauro nehushingi, zvakadzama achitipakurira ruzivo rwakakomba zvinove zvakashandura muono nemaitiro angu uye mabatiro andaiita vanhu vairarama neutachiwana. Akataura zvema shingles (njovhera). Kaive kekutanga kunzwa zvirwere zvakasiyana siyana, zvinobata munhu anorarama neutachiwana kana vamwewo vanhu vanosangana nevanhu pabonde vasinahanya yekuzvidzivirira. Akataura zvekuti mwana wake akazvarwa neHIV uye airarama neutachiwana zvinove zvaitove chishamiso kwatiri kunzwa kuti munhu anokwanisa kurarama neHIV. Isu taiziva kuti munhu wese aitofa akangotapukirwa neHIV.

Ndakava nekugadzikana muhana, mushure mekuteerera dzidziso yaAuxillia uyo aizviti (I am an activist) kureva kuti aitove murwiri kana kuti gweta rezvekodzere dze vanorarama neutachiwana hwe chirwere cheshuramatongo.

Ndakazosara ndodzokera kumusha kuzororo ndave nemuono mutsva panyaya yeutachiwana. Kumusha ndaive neshuviro yekuona hama neshamwari. Hapano, ndaka ronga kushanyira Sekuru vangu vava Mudzidzisi. Haa hama wee ndakasvika sangana nezvandaisa tarisira pana Sekuru.

Sekuru seMudzidzisi vaive vakarongeka vaine motokari yavo tsvuku yaive chazesa mudunhu, kuri kunaka kwayo. Vaive nemudzimai nevana vatatu. Mhuri yavo yayivevedza uye yaive nechiremerera mudunhu rese. Musha wavo waive wakarongeka zvekuti hapana aisa shuvira kuvakawo zvakanyakisa kudaro. Kana varoyi chaivo vaitombotsveta zvegodo vakayeverwa nemusha wasekuru vangu.

Ndichisvika pachivanze chavo ndaitarisira mufaro, wakanyanya. Ndaive nezvishinji zvekuva zuwira zvandaive ndadzidza kuGweru ku Chikoro chevadzidzisi, nezvimwewo zvakarekerwa kubasa redu

rehudzidzisi. Ndaitarisira kuti ndigo wedzerwa ruzivo pazviri naidzo nyanzvi dzagara pabasa kwemakore, saSekuru. Ndakavawana vagere havo mumotokari mavo, motokari haina kunge yashanduka, asi shanduko yaive pana sekuru, yakandi vhundutsa! Handina mashoko angatsanangure marwadzo andakanzwa ndavaona vakaita kunonzi kuwumbuka, kuperezeka, nekuve mutenda. Zvandakaona zvaisafanira kuve pana Sekuru vangu. Ndaitoti vanhu vakadzidza vanemhuri dzavo vakarongeka havabatwe neutachiwana. Mhondoro yefundo yakange yave demhe, hongu pamwe mudehenya mavo fundo yaive ichirimo asika guyu kununa kunze ndiko kwatinoda isu zvekuzoita masvosve mukati zvinozoonekwa pave paya.

Ndaida sekuru vangu vekare kwete ava. Zvese zvataive takadzidziswa mayererano neurwere hweShuramatongo zvaionekera pana Sekuru. Zviya zvinonzi mugoni wepwere ndeasina ichokwadi. Ndakapererwa zvekutoona kuti ivo vaive vagara vasina tariro asi inini ndakatobva ndanyanyisa kugumirwa kwacho. Pamwe dai ari parinhasi ndavenemuono neushingi neku yarukawo ndaigona kunge dai ndakavabatsira kana kuva gamuchira zvirinani kwazvo. Ndaive mwanamudiki ndisati ndatombobvawo zera saka ndakarohwa nehana ndikapererwa. Ndakazo zvishingisa ndikava kwazisa hangu asi mwoyo wangu waive waenda kurekure nekubatikana neutano hwaSekuru. Ndakazama kuzvishingisa asi ndaimbo wanikwa ndangoti tuzu nendangariro zvekuti vaitombo pedzisa nyaya yatainge totaura inini ndisisanzwe mazwi avai buritsa. Ndaisamanzwa kwete nekuti havasikugona kutaura kwete, asi kuti ndainga ndadzamisa pfungwa ndavhiringika ndave kuto funga vamwe vashakabvu vandaive ndamboona vakadai saSekuru. Ndaidzamisa pfungwa ndichiona kuti ndatatarisana nerumwe rufu. Zvaibaya pakati pemwoyo wangu ndigere parutivi rwavo. Kana ivowo ndinodaira kuti vakatozviona kuti mwana avhiringika neutano hweMudzidzisi wake.

Ndaivakoshesa Sekuru vangu, vaive ndivo mumwe wevanhu vandaiyemura, nekuda kutevera tsoka dzavo. Asi Mukondombera waive watotonga kare. Hapana pandaichazo vanunura pachikara chakadai. Ndaive ndapererwa, kuomeswa mate mukana naiyo Shuramatongo ye utachiwana iyoyi. Ndakazosara ndodzokera hangu kuchikoro asi haa ndaive ndagurwa kunorira, ndabaiwa nyamanhete nebanga jena. Ndaive ndisisina kana zano pamusoro peukoshwa hwakadai. Hoshha iyoyi ndaive ndato simudza mawoko mudenga, ndagumirwa. Ndakazongoti:

"Nhaisi Mwari ko tichazovei maererano nechirwere chakadai? Nhaisi Mwari zvichaguma seiko zvekutorerwa vadikani nemagamba edu?". Zvaityisa sezvo mu nhau maisabuda zvisvinu mayererano nekukundwa kwe Mukondombera. Zvaingonzi panhau, varikuita tsvakurudzo yemishonga ingarape varwere ve AIDS pasina chisvinu chiribuda.

Sekuru vakazofa, vakasiya mudzimai wavo nevana vatatu. Murombo haarove chinenguwo, uye nhamo haibve paneimwe. Panherera nhatu idzi, wekupedzisira wacho aive akazvarwa neutachiwana zvekare. Muone kurwadza kwazvo. Waiti ukatarisa Ambuya, vasara waitowedzera misodzi. Ambuya vaito raramiswawo naSekuru. Vairoja kuNorton kwaive kwaishandira sekuru. Shirikadzi yaive zvino yatarisana nekurwisana neutachiwana hwaive muropa, kwozoti zvakare kurwisana nekutsvaga chouviru, pedzezvo votarisana nenyatwa yekuriritira mwana arikurarama neutachiwana. Hama wee njodo njodo toiziva, iyi yaive nhamo kwete yekutamba nayo.

Asi yaive iri nhamo iri pamusvuuganda, dzvinyu risina kana gushe zvaro. Waibva watopererwa nezano rekupakurira ambuya. Waizongo pedzesera nekutarisa kuna Mwari, wovati pindirai.

Hazvina kutora nguva refu, Ambuya vakatatarika kwemakore matatu, nerechina bedzi ndiye sarai. Mwanasikana wekupedzesera uya ndonda yedu yekurarama neutachiwana, yakazo teverawo kwamupfiganebwe, zvikarwadza weduwee. Tichiri kutura befu nekupukuta misodzi pakurwadzirwa mhuri yasekuru. Takazoshamisika kunzwa kuti dangwe ravo raivewo zvakare nehutachiwana, isu taiti

zvimwe gotwe rega ndiro rairarama neutachiwana. Haa weduwee kana uchimbo rwadziwa pakurarama, ndakabaiwa pasi pemwoyo nemaitikiro azvakaita pamhuri yasekuru vangu. Apa chekuva batsira nacho paive pasina mukore iwoyo. Yaive garoziva kuti wese atapukirwa neHIV, atarisana napo pasi panodya hapaguti.

Zvakadarowo, nyika yedu yaive kumuswe panyaya yekuti rubatsiro rwezveutano rwunobva kuma boka makuru akaita se World Health Organisation rwugozosvika. Nyika dziri kusimukira hadzina zvikwanisiro zvekurodza matemo mukutsvakurudza zvinorapa AIDS. Tisinga shorewo hedu vana godobori vanoziwa midzi vaiyedzawo nepavanogona kusanganisa midzi vachigadzira maguchu aizomwiwa nevarwere kusimbisa mitezo nekudzivirira kutapurirwa zvirwere kana munhu achinge ave neutachiwana. Asi mhedzisiro yazvo yaizongove yekupedzerwa mari muchitengeserwa mishonga isina kunyatso vhenekwa kuti izivikanwe mashandiro ayo. Vamwe vashoma vaizowanikwa vagwinyawo nekuda kwemimwe mishonga yechivanhu.

Vamwewo vaipedzerwa mari nezvipfuyo vachiripiswa vachinzi kuroiwa iyo iri shuramatongo ye Mukondombera we HIV/AIDS. Yaive bishi nemheremhere munyika dzese dzepasi rino.

Zvakashaya basa dangwe rasekuru rikazongo teverawo rarohwa nechakapedza mbudzi.

Aive avenemakore makumi maviri anoraudzira.

Mwanakomana iyeyu aive ari muKaturike akatendeka, aive jaya raiyemurika kwazvo aine tsika dzekurerwa muchiKristu. Hatizive kuti kusvika mukufa aizviziva here kuti aive azvarwa nechirwere? Asi takarwadziwa nerufu rwake, mukomana aive aine tarisiko yakanyanya yekuita zvihombe mukurarama, asi akango dimburirwa pakati. Mhuri iyoyi yakatirwadza pachokwadi. Haisi nyore kuona musha uchivharwa mikova kuti gwibha poita padongo, nekuda kwe mukondombera. Izvi zvino nyanyo shungurudza pakuti taive tisina ruzivo rwekubatsira mhuri nevadikani kuti vasatsvairwe nechakapedza mbudzi.

Mukurarama kwangu ndaka batwabatwa kwazvo nekurasikirwa nevadikani, nevavakidzani kuburikidza nechirwere ichochi cheShuramatongo yeMukondombera we HIV/ AIDS.

Ndichinyora kudai nditori nemisodzi pamatama, pamwe pachu ndinodumbirwa zvekutadza kuenderera mberi nekunyora nekuti, ndangariro dzinenge dzandikurira. Hongu ndakanzvingeswa kutapukirwa neutachiwana asi hakusi kugona, kana kungwara kwangu. Ndingatadze kuziva, zvazvinoreva kurarama neutachiwana asi kurwadziwa ndakasvitswa kumagumo, ndaka tsondokotwa mwoyo ndikasvika pakusaziva kuti mberi kwatiri kuenda pane achasara ari mupenyu here? Ndaive ndavekuita kumberereka, ndichifamba mumugwagwa zvaikonzerwa nendangariro dzaidzoka mupfungwa. Waitozoona pamwe wapesana nemunhu waunoziva okuswedza iwe kana kumudaira. Ndaitombo svika nguva yandai shaiwa chatairongerwa upenyu kana chatayiendera kuchikoro, kana magumo ehupenyu hwedu taizongo dzimwa semwenje nemhepo yavhuvhuta.

Makore aipindana hawo, mabazi ehutano edzimwe nyika dzemhiri vainguno shambadzira kuti tsvakurudzo dzavo dzirikuendeka, uye dzimwe dzacho dzaive dzave pamharadzano yekuzove dzinobatsira vanhu kubva kudenda irori. Vanhu vazhinji vaingoshuvira kuti zvikasike. Vashomawo munharaunda ndivo vaiti hakuna Mukondombera. Vamwe vaidaro nekuti vaitenda munezvakasiyana siyana, asi isu vamwe taive tarasikirwa taiziva kuti chaiveko chirwere.

Tave mugore ra 1999 ndaka rasikirwa nehama yepedyo. Mwana wamaivangu chaiye, muninina wangu aindi tevedzera, wandaive ndakasiyira zamu. Aive asvitsva makore makumi maviri nemashanu bedzi

mufunge henyu. Aive nenjere dzinopinza musikana iyeye zvekuti ari mudiki kwandiri kudaro aive atovaka bhindauko rake. Bhizimusi rake raitove rakurumbira nenguva diki diki.

Akasiya mwanakomana aive nemakore matanhatu ekuberekwa, achitotarisirwa kuti mugore ra2000 atangidzewo kuenda kuchikoro. Rakava pfumojena rabaya pamwoyo wemhuri yose. Takarwadziwa tikashaya mushumo wazvo. Nyenyedzi yaive pakati pedu yakanga yadzimwa tika bayikana nekubvunza Mwari kuti taive tambonyanyo tadzei kuti tiwirwe neshurapadunhu rakadaro. Mucheche ndiye otungamira vakuru vachisara?

Muninina wangu asati ashaya. Ndaidzidzisa kuchikoro chekumaruva, zvinove zvinotadzisa kuti munhu agare akabata nhau dzirikuitika pasi pose. Chivhitivhiti ndaive ndisina, ndaiponeswa neka dzangaradzimu kadiki kandinzwisa nhau apo neapo. Siku nesikati pandaika batidza kaWairesi kangu ikaka ndaitarisira kunzwa nhau dzakanangana nekuwanikwa kwemushonga unorapa Mukondombera. Zuva rega rakasikwa naMwari ndaitotarisirwa bedzi kunzwa kuti vanaMazvikokota vezvehutano vazowanikidza mushonga. Zvairwadza kuteerera nhau pasina chabuda. Hapana chinovota sekuti mwana wamai vako arikuperezeka muviri nehosha iyo Wairesi yotadza kutaura kuti mushonga wazowanikwa. Unonzwa shungu dzekunge uchaenda kunoti kasikai mhani kuwana mushonga weAIDS ndiponesewo muninina wangu. Asi chekuita paive pasina. Ndaito tsamwira nhepfenyuro sekunonzi ndivo vanemhinduro yandaitarisira, izvo kwaani? Vaingo shamararawo panemashoko avapihwa kuti vamwaye mumasaisai.

Mwana iyeye akachehura neurwere, kupera kusara mabhonzwo avekuonekera. Vhudzi raiyerera, ganda kucheneruka kuti mbuu.

Mazuva ake, Muninina wangu aikwikwidza parunako veduwee, aive akanaka zvainwisa mvura. Aive azere nehutano mazuva ake chaiwo. Aive akaumbwa zvekuti ndivovaya vanosarudzwa kuti vashandiswe kushambadza nhumbi muzvitoro zvepamusoro. Aive azere nesimba rekurarama uye aigara akafara. Asi akadzikiswa kubva pahu tsvarakadenga akagumisira aita sekachembere neurwere. Kachembere kenguva yagocha nhembe chaiko.

Tsvarakadenga yakava hari yofanzirofa nenguva dikidiki. Kuchembedzwa neutachiwana. Akange avekugara akapfeka nguwani yeshinda, nemugubvududu werokwe raitsvaira pasi, zvaibva zvanyatso buritsa huchembere hwese, pamucheche iyeye. Weduwee mukondombera waive wakaoma makarekare. Chitaurirwa hunyimwa mbare dzekumusana. Muninina wangu, chigagairwa chemusikana chakave mvemve.

Zvaisave nyore kuona weropa rimwechete nerako achisakadzwa nechirwere. Pese paibuda zuva waitoona kuti munhu awedzera kuperezeka. Iye murwere aiyedza nepese paaigona kuzvishingisa. Chero mukayedza kumuti azorodze nyama aisazvida, aibva abuda mumba ototi ndiperekedzewo kuchipatara, kunova kwaingononzi anezvakawanda zvaasiri kuwirirana nazvo zvirikurwisana nemuviri wake. Takatenge tavekuzvi gamuchira padiki padiki kuti mukondombera wakange wadzika midzi pachivanze pedu, chekuita paive pasina. Nechemumwoyo ndaingoti ko neiko pasina chirikubudawo paNhau mudzangaradzimu redu, chinechekuitawo nekuwanikwa kwemishonga inoporesa vanhu. Ndaingoti, nhai Mwari pindirai, ko zvotopera masikati machena. Mukudunura imomo ndaingo chema kuna Mwari kuti sei zvirikuitika kune vanhu varipedyo neni nguva dzose? Rwendo rwuno aiva munin'ina chaiye wandakasiira mukaka. Kurwadza kwazvo kwaive pasi pemwoyo. Muninina wangu akazo fuga jira rake ega, zvinove zvakandibaya mukatikati kusvika pamwongo. Akasiya mwanakomana airaramawo zvekare ne utachiwana. Ndichinguno dai kunyora nhorondo iyi, Weduwee kaa! Hupenyu mutoro chokwadi. Ndinenge, ndisingadi kutaura nezvazvo, asi kuti ivo vazvitaure vega mufunge. Asi marwadzo andakasangana nawo ndikasama durura saizvozvi handifunge kuti mwoyo wangu

ungagadzikane. Uye nendangariro hadziperi nhando. Zvinhu zvakandidya mwoyo nekundi shungurudza mukurarama kusvika zuva ranhasi uno.

Inini ndakati nonokeyi kuroorwa, tichienzanisa ne munin'ina wangu. Chimwe chezvikonzero zvekunonoka kupinda musvitsa, kwaitove kutya chaiko. Ndaizeza kuzosangana neutachiwana. Ndaiti ndikarangarira vese vashakabvu vandakaona vari muwanano vachizopedzesera vabatwa nechirwere ndaibva ndanzwa kutya kukuru mukati mandiri.

Zvekuroorwa kana kuroora hazvina hazvo anotiza akasvika kure. Hapano ndazoorwawo paya ndokuitawo mwana wanguwo. Mumusha mandakaroorwa maive ne hanzvadzi yeMurume wangu wandakawana afirwa nemurume wake, ndofunga kwakanga kwatodarika makore matatu zvaitika. Akanga asiwa aine mwana aive nemakore mashanu.

Takagara naTete vaya tikawirirana zvkapindiridza, zvekutoti ndakazo pedzesera ndavekutogara pakamuri yepamba pavo. Ndaibva kumaruwa kwandaidzidzisa ndichisvikira pamba pavo ndogara zvangu pamadiro. Taipota tichiita mabhindauko ekunotenga zvinhu kunze kwenyika tese naTete tichifara tiri shamwari dzepamwoyo.

Taiti tiri parwendo kudaro sevanhu taipinda chitendero chimwe cheKaturike, tayiita minamoto yeRozari pamwe chete. Mumwe musi tiriparwendo kudaro ndipo pakapfudzunuka vaTete pfundo raiva muhana mavo ndokundi nyeurira dambudziko raive rakavanzika riri mudende remwoyo wavo.

Vakazondi zevezera kuti ndizvo zvaivepo, kuti vairarama ne utachiwana hwe HIV. Haa vasikana kaa! Ko zvinodarirei? Shamwari yangu yepamwoyo ichivazve Tete vangu, yopindana nachozve chakapedza mbudzi? Ahh ndakasvimha misodzi handidi kunyepa. Ndakabatikana, kuti ko sei ndainguno sanganiswa nevanhu vane mwoyo yakanaka, asi mhedzisiro yazvo yozove misodzi pamatama angu.

Pandakaudzwa zvakananzika zvaive muhana maTete taive tichango darika muganhu wenyika kubva South Africa, kupinda medu. muno. Paive pakati pehusiku, tave muguta re Bietbridge. KuHarare kwakandiitira kure musi uyu, nekuda kwe nhaurirano inovhundutsa yandakanga ndaita naivo Tete vangu. Ndakazongo zvidzora nekuisa munamoto kuna Mwari kuti andishingise ndigo simudza mutoro unorema.

Panguva iyi, vaTete vaisa taridzika semurwere, vaive vachaka gwinya kwazvo. Mwanasikana wavo aive achiri mudiki uye, aikura zvake zvakanaka. Ndaive muugaro hwekuzvisimbisa pamusoro pemwanasikana waTete. Ndaisada kufungira kuti mwana uyu ane utachiwana. Zvaisambo uya mupfungwa dzangu.

Ndaisviko pfuurira kuenda kumaruva kwandaishanda, zvisina kana dambudziko nekuti ndaiperekedzwa nemotokari naTete. Tainzwanana kwazvo taive neukama hwemandorokwati. Takaparadzana zvakanaka ivo vodzokera havo.

Zvakadaro, pachikoro apa ndaifundisa pamwechete nemumwe mukomana aibva kumusha kumwe chete neni. Ndiye munhu akazobvisa dande mutande mumaziso mangu kuti ndicherechedze utanho hwemwana waTete aiva muzukuru kwandiri. Mukomana uyu akanditi: "hauoni here kuti mwanasikana waTete vako anekakusa nyatsokura maari, akatsonga kudarika zvaanotarisirwa pazera rake. Handina kuda kuzviratidza kumukomana uyu kuti ndabatikana, ndakango tsikatsika ndoku paradzana hedu. Asi ndichingopinda mumba mangu ndakapuzikira pamubhedha ndichi svimha misodzi. Ndakanga nda bengenutswa kubva mukurota zvakanaka zvirimberu zvekukura kwemwana wedu achiita mhandara achizobudirira nekuvewo munhu anovandudza upenyu hwenyika yake. Ndaichemera ramangwana remwana kuti ko sei Mwari? Inga munoti regai vaduku vauye kwandiri musavarambidze. Zvino kana Mukondombera wave ndiwo

wodimburira vacheche upenyu neramangwana rakajeka, yozove nyika rudzii nhai Mwari? Misodzi yakaita rwizi pamatama, mutsago ukasveta mimwe kusvika waguta. Kana kuzomboziva kuti dzaive nguvai kana kuti mukova hwakavharwa here kana kurangarira chimwe chipi zvacho. Ndakazongo biwa nehope pamutsago munyoro iwoyo, ndokuzo peputswa nekachando kepakati pehusiku. Ndakazongo kwanisa kupinda mumagumbeze nekuto pfodora hope pakare. Zvekuti ndadya here kana kuti mukova wakavharwa here handina kana kuzvirangarira nekuda kwemarwadzo ekuona zvandaka mboona kuvana vaSekuru vangu vayaa, zvave kurudunuka zvakare pane wangu muzukuru, mwana waTete.

Nguva haitane kudyana, mazuva opindana gore rovirika rimwe gore. Takanga zvino tave muGore ra2001.

Mwari akatusukidza kusvika tapinda mugore ra 2010, Tete vangu ndiye sarai. Vakaenda kunosangana nemadzitateguru avo. Shamwari yepamwoyo, sahwira wangu mukuru, murume wangu wechikadzi, akabvutwa pakati pedu ndikasara ndavekuita senherera. Nherera chaiyo akasiwa ave nemakore makumi maviri pakazofa Tete. Ndakazo sara naye tichi simbisana, kusesekedzana, nekukurudzirana kuchema ne tariro. Iyewo akazenge ambobatikana akambozvi bvisa pachirongwa, zvinova zvisinga kurudzirwe. Ndakatatsurana naye, muurwere dzimweni dzenguva, akazo dzokera hake pakumwa mapiritsi zvakanaka, kuitira kuti arambe akagwinya. Ndakange ndisisade kuti apukunyuke zvakare ndigozo wanikwa ndomuviga aaah ! Kwete. Mishonga yakange yatekeshera saka mukana wekuchapa shuramatongo umwe munhu pakanga pasisina. Ndinongo tendawo, World Health Organisation nekushingirira kwavakaita kudzimura moto weAIDS waiti ukabvira waisiya mimwe misha yave matongo. Ndichitendawo vese vanotevedzera zvinotaurwa nevehutano kuri kuzvidzimirira mukuwira murufu. Zvakakosha kuti munhu akasike kuwana dzidziso kubva kunyanzvi dzezveutano, obatisisa zvinodiwa pachirwere chipi zvacho chaitwa tsvakurudzo.

Nhasi uno muzukuru wangu tinaye avekuto shandira kusvitsa gore rechi makumi matatu nemaviri. Ndakatomu kurudzira kuti akawana mukana azvitaurewo ega rwendo rweupenyu rwaakafamba mugwaronyorwa irori. Kana nguva yake yasvika yekuzvi sunungura achazo paridzawo nhorondo yake, igozobatsira vamwewo pasi rese. Kana nguva yakwana muchamunzwa ozvitaurewa.

Inini rwendo rwangu harwu tevedzereke, nekuti rwakandisunda mukuita zvidzidzo zve HIV/AIDS, kusanganisira zvidzidzo zvekunyaradza vanenge vachishungurudzika (Counselling), naicho chirwere kana upenyu hahwo. Ndakaenderera mberi ndikaenda kunodzidza kugarisana kwevanhu uye zvevanhurume nevanhukadzi (Sociology & Gender Studies). Ndaidzidzira zvese izvi kuti ndive nehushingi uye ndisimbe pakubatsira vanhu panyaya dzakanangana nematenda anoparadza vanhu pasi rese akaita seMukondombera. Iye zvino ndiri kudzidza zvekare zvidzidzo zvepamusoro zveku chengetedzwa kwevana(Masters Degree in Child Protection). Nekuda kwekuti ndakaona zvakananda panyaya yenherera dzeHIV/AIDS. Vazhinji vanhu havatarise vana vasiyiwa kana kuti vana vakazvarwa neutachiwana. Vana ivava vanopindana nematambudziko akasiyana siyana. Pfungwa ne miviri yavo inogona kushungurudzika pahutano. Asi vana vazhinji havazokwanise kuwana munhu wekunyatso budira pachena saka vano pedzesera vachikuvarira mukati seHosho. Vamwe vanotozoita pfungwa dzekuzvi kuvadza nezvinodhaka, kana kuzvipfuudza. Ndizvo zvakaite kuti ndide kudzidza nezvevana. Zvidzidzo zve mukondombera neutachiwana zvinondipa ruzivo rwakanwana kuti ndizobatsira vamwe kunyanya vacho vanorarama neutachiwana. Mhuri kana shamwari kana avo vano chengeta vanorarama neHIV, vanodawo zvekare kunyaradzwa nekukurudzirwa, kuti vagone kuriritira varwere nenherera dzeMukondombera. Nekuti vana ivava vanodawo kuyeuchidzwa, nekuonekwa kuti:

Vanwa mapiritsi nenguva here?;

Vadya zvinovaka muviri here?;

havasi kushungurudzwa here? Upenyu hwavo hunogona kuve hwaka vhenekwa nedunhu rese, vachi shungurudzwa. Nekuti semwa, kana kusarurwa. Kune zvakawanda zvinodiwa nevana vanorarama neutachiwana, kupfeka, kuita shamwari, kana kuwirawo murudo chaiko kwakava koshera. Kuzvichengetedza pabonde kwakakosha kuti vadzidziswe vari vadiki kuitira kana vozotanga kutsvagawo shamwarikadzi kana shamwarirume murudo. Ndizvo zvimwe zvakandituma kuti ndide kudzikadzika nefundo inounza vandudzo muupenyu hwemunhu wese anehama kana shamwari inorarama neHIV. Kusanganisirawo nevariku riritira vanhu vakadaro.

Nemuzukuru wangu mwana waTete takazotoita usahwira hwemhando yepamusoro. Tinowirirana, neku dyidzana tinoita zvinhu zvizhinji pamwe kusanganisira kunyaradzana munguva yematambudziko. Tino nzwisana zvakanyanya. Ndinofara nekuti kwaakabva kure. Iye zvino avekuzvishandira basa rake rakanaka ari kuto rarama kudarika vamwe vezera rake. Asi kuti ayambuke kuzosvika paari senherera zvaisave nyore, aiva matsurundundu. Ndiko kusaka ndati vana ivava vanoda mwoyo une rudo uye, vanoda kudzidziswa zvizere.

Vanoda zvidzidzo zvizere pamusoro pekurarama neutachiwana. Pamwe pachu unotovapinza chikoro chekuti vanzwisise kuti sei vakazvarwa vachinzi vagare vachinwa mapiritsi.

Vanhu vanowanzo chema hama yavo inenge yafa neMukondombera, vachikanganwa vana vasara. Kuti vanochoengetwa naani? Kunyanya vanenge vazvarwa ne utachiwana vanotoda mwoyo unerudo. Kuitirawo pavano pererwa nemazano, kana kuwomerwa neupenyu kana kushungurudzika. Vanodawo anobatsiridza, nekusimudza mitoro yeupenyu. Kuyechidzwawo kumwa mapiritsi zvichingodaro. Chinhu chikuru chandaka tenda Mwari kunyanya, inyaya yekuti ndakazoita ushamwari hwepamwoyo naiyo nherera yakasiwa naVaTete vangu. Saka tiritese.

Kubva pandakaudzwa naTete mamiriro ehutano hwe mwanasikana wavo ndakazvi chengeta muhana. Nekuda kwekudzidza zvakadzika nyaya dzemukondombera kwandakaita hazvina kuzondinetsa kuchengetedza chitsidzo chekusa buritsa mararamiro emunhu maererano neutachiwana iye muridzi asina kuzvitendera. Munhu anosununguka ega kuudza waanoda kwete kuti iwewe wochifamba uchishambadza utano hwemunhu. Tete vakatoona kuti ndikatadza kukunda chirwere mwana wangu anowana pekupotera. Chinhu chakanaka kuti mubereki kana urwere hwakwidza utsvage sahwira kana hama inozoku miririra usisipo.

Rwendo rwandakafamba rweHIV/AIDS rwakaomarara. Ndaingoti ndichibva mukutura befundo ndosimudzira zvekare iwee. Ipapa ndinofara kuti muzukuru wangu arikurarama zvakana, agere zvakana.

Ndichifara kudaro ndakazoonza zvekare mainini vakewo anova munin'ina waTete avekuratidzika kusave neutano hwakati tsvikiti. Ndikati herino rimwe gomo remakwiro. Akatanga kurwara zvakaipisisa, apa inini ndaigara kure neguta reHarare, kumaruwa ekuMarondera ndiko kwandai dzidzisa. Ndakatozo bvako ndavaku swederawo muguta reMarondera pava paya. Takanga tave mugore ra 2007, apo Tete vadiki (Hanzvadzi yeMurume wangu) vakauya, vachiratidza kuperezeka nekusave mutano. Tete vaive vakuru kwandiri nemakore angade kusvika gumi. Inini ndaive ndichine makore, makumi matatu anemaviri. Ndichiva cherechedza kudai ndakaona zvechokwadi kuti munhu arikurwara. Ndikaona nzwara dzavo ndikaona kuti sandizvo zvinowanikwa pamunhu mutano. Ndakafungidzira kuti vaive vaita chirwere chinonzi nechirungu (Thrush). Nekuverengawo nezvandaionawo mukunorapwa ndiine nhumbu.

Ndakambenge ndambo sanganawo nemumwe Chiremba. Aitaurawo hondo yaakarwisana nayo kuedza kuchengetedza utano hwehama yake, yaive yaita muzvezve weAIDS, akazokundikana.

Takagara zvizuva naTete ndokuzowoneka havo. Vakatenda nekuvabata zvakanaka kwandaive ndaita. Asi pfungwa yangu nemwoyo zvakandirambira kuti vadzokere ndisina kuvaita kuti vaongororwe naChiremba. Ndakabva ndafunga Chiremba uyaa. Ndokuva nyengetedza kuti vatange vambo vhenekwa. Ndakava rayira mafambiro ekunoonana naChiremba kuti vagozodzokera havo vambotorwa ropa. Sezvineiwo, havana kupikisana neni. Vakazono vhenekwa naChiremba, vakawanikwa CD4 yavo iri pa4 bedzi. Zvakavhundutsa Chiremba akamhanya mhanya kuvapa mushonga nekubva avaisa pachirongwa chekumwa mapiritsi emaARV. Chakave chinhu chakanaka chakaita kuti Tete vangu vararame kwemamwe makore anechitsama. Vakatozo simba kuita chivhindikiti.

Kwakazouyayo hondo yemabara asingaoneke akabva neku Guta reWuhan neche kumabvazuva, mhiri kwemakungwa ukoo, kunyika yeChina. Fivhirimupengo kana kuti Covid-19 yakazouya nehondo yakaoma, yakazunguza pasi pese. VaTete vangu mugore ra2021 vakazo tisiya nekuda kwedenda re Covid-19. Zvakandirwadza zvikuru firo yavo nekuti kwavakanga vabva ndiko kwaive kure. Ndaisatarisira kuti vanga kundikane pakurwisana neFivhirimupengo ye Covid-19, ivo vakambo rwisana neShumba yaidzvova, yemukondombera vakaikunda. Ndaka bayikana nerufu rwavo zvekuti nanhasi ndinongonzwa kuti dai Mwari akavarwirawo paDzihwamupengo reCovid-19. Ndiyo nzira yavowo yekubva panerino pasi, yavakanga vakagadzirirwa naMwari. Tete vadiki vaive vave munhu wepiri kushamwaridzana naye, mushure mekufa kwa Tete vakuru. Zvainguno taurwa hazvo kuti vese vaneutachiwana hwe HIV vazvidzvirire zvakanyanya nekuda kwekuti vanamazvikokota vaive vaona kuti Covid-19 inova dheerera. Ndakazongo nzwisisa hangu ndikazvi gamushira kuti pakaita mhepo mbiri yeMukondombera neye Fivhirimupengo.

Firo yaTete vadiki yabva yandifungisa zvekare, mugore ra 1999, musu wa 22 Zvita, pataka firwa nemuramu wangu. Ndakanga ndapihwa mutoro wekumu riritira sezvo Mudzimai wake aive kure. Zvikanzi ndoda hangu kuchengetwa nemi. Ndaingomu chengetawo neruzivo rwandaive narwo rwushoma irworwo. Asi ndaive nekakufungira kakanyanya kuti waive Mukondombera waive wapinda muropa ravo. Hondo yacho yakazondi kurira sekutaura kwandaita. Ndavafunga nekuda kwekuti hama zhinji dzemurume dzakanga dzatapurikwa neutachiwana, ndini ndakadzi pepa.

Handizive kuti sei zvakadaro, asi ndofunga inyaya yekuti ndaive netsiye nyoro pavanhu vese vaive vasangana nechirwere che Shuramatongo yeAIDS.

Handifungi kuti pane zvandaigona kuita kuti ndisava chengete vachirwara, nekuti ndakanga ndabvira pahudiki kusanganidzana maziso nechirwere ichochi. Chakandi tanhaurira vadikani vangu mumwe nemumwe kubva paneino nyika. Zvinodzimba mumwoyo. Hazvinei kuti munhu afa haisi hama yeropa, chinorwadza ukama hwamunenge mavaka mukurararama. Zvakare chainyanyorwadza pazviri kushaya nzira yekurapa nayo vanhu ivava. Dai zvaive zvimwe zvirwere kana kuti tsaona yemumugwaga. Maronda unoisawo munyu, kana arimabhonzu unosungirirawo chimuti mapfupa akadzokedzana. HIV/AIDS yakandigura kunorira, ndika kanda mapfumo pasi. Ndakaomeswa mate mukurama ndikashaya wekuturirawo nhuna dzangu.

Ndinongo tenda Mwari kuti mazuvano haachafanani nemakarekare iwayo, apo taiona varwere vachifamba. Tave nenzira dzeku chengetedza vese vatapurikwa neutachiwana. Patove nerunyerekupe rwekuti vachange vave kumwa piritsi rimwe chete mwedzi wese zvinove zvino gamuchirika mukurararama.

Havasi vega vanhu vaneutachiwana vanorwadziwa ne HIV/AIDS. Pamwe pachu ndairarama ndichitya kuti ndikawirirana nemunhu aneutachiwana ndichazochema andisiya. Nekuti makore iwayo vanhu vaitongofa zviri nyore panekurararama. Takarasikirwa zvakanaka nekuda kwedenda irori.

Iye zvino ndaakuverenga zvakanyanya pamusoro peHIV /AIDS. Ndaka sarudza kuita katsika kekuti Gore negore kunyanya paKisimusi ndozvipa chipo cheku vhenekwa ropa. Zemunhu ndiri muwanano zvinova zvinondiisa panjodzi kana pakaita kusavimbika. Murume wangu pakutanga, aisazvifarira zvekuti ndivhenekwe vhenekwe gore negore. Asi ndotenda nekuti akazozvigashira. Nekuda kwekuti ndakamuudza kuti upenyu ndehwangu, zvirinani kugara ndichiziva zvandiri pane kusaziva pandimire.

Ndichaedza kuramba ndichirarama ndisina utachiwana.

Ndiri munhu anogara achingo verenga zvinyorwa zve HIV/AIDS. Zvakare basa rangu rekudzidzisa ragara rinondisanganisa nevana vechikoro vakawanda vanorarama neutachiwana. Varimo muzvikoro vachiri kuzvarwa nacho chirwere asi zvave nani mazuvano havana kuwanda sekare.

Nherera dze Mukondombera dzirimo zvakare muzvikoro, dzinodawo zvakare kuti nhorondo dzavo dzibuditswe vataurewo nyaya dzavo.

Ndikakundiswa, ndichaedza kunyora nezvandaka sangana nazvo kubasa zvakanangana neutachiwana hwe shuramatongo.

Rega nditi hanzvadzi yangu, yaive iri Ngunzi panyaya yemarokwe apa. Vaiwana vakadzi vavada nenguva yavada. Vaiita kufusha vakadzi, pavadira, vaisambo kendenga kuti kunze kuneyi. Vakazofa mugore ra1995. Mava muna 1996, ndakazosangana nemumwe mukadzi aimbenge achidanana naMushakabvu. Akandi bata ruwoko ndokumira parutivi pedu tega. Akandibvunza zvinyoro nyoro asi chiso chake chichi ratidza kushushikana kwazvo. Zvikanzi neMukadzi uya:

"Iwe shamwari, wakadii hako? Ndakanzwa kuti Bhudhi vako vaya vakashaya ichokwadi here? Uye vakarwara here, chii chakavauraya? Havana kufa neAIDS here?"

Unoziva, kuti munhu akakubvunza aine chiso chairatidza kushushikana kukuru kwekuti munhu aitenge aine kakutya, kana newewo unobva watya kuwedzera kumu shungurudza.

Ndakangozo mupindura kuti:

"Ichokwadi hongu, kuti Bhudhi vangu vakarwara vakazoshayika asi kuti vakafa nei handizive".

Chaishamisa pamukadzi uyu ndechekuti, isusu taitoziva kuti akanga ari mukadzi wemuridzi. Wotozvisvaya kuti munhu arimuwana anodirei mhinduro yechakauraya munhurume asina ukama naye. Zvakatondi shamisawo nekuti aive ari pamberi pangu kuGweru Technical Teachers College(GTTC) nemakore maviri, paaidanana neHanzvadzi yangu pachu. Kaitove kekutanga kusangana naye, mukadzi uyu saka magumo ake handina zvakanangana zvandinga taure, nekuda kwekuti hatina kuzo onanazve. Bhudhi vangu vaive munhu anemwoyo munyoro zvekuti vanhu vese vaibva munharaunda yedu, vaida nzvimbo pa GTTC, aivabatsira kuwana mukana wekudzidza.

Pane mumwezve mukadzi aive mukuru kwandiri pakuzvarwa, asi aive kumashure kwangu nemakorewo maviri kuchikoro KuGTTC. Nekuda kwekuti mukadzi uyu aive nehukama nemurume akarooro vaTete vangu, aindishevedza achiti mhamha. Aive mvana ine mwana wayo mumwe chete, asi asina hake murume. Akawanirwa nzvimbo zvekare naBhudhi. Akauya kukamuri yangu nguva dzemasikati kuzondiona. Akasvikonditi, Bhudhi vedu vari kundida. Ndakatombi inga tinobva kumana kumwechete, uye avawo ndiBhudhi vako zvakare unotoziva kuti vaneMukadzi wavo kumba, unozozvi fambisa sei? Handina kuziva kuti vanhu ava vaitenge vatotamba tsoro yavo kare, apa kwakanga kuri kuda kundibata kumeso sechana che Gudo. Ndakatozo zviziva pava paya kuti vaito tamba mutambo wevakuru nechakare. Vaitoita zvavaiita vachidanana havu muchivande. Asika rinemanyanga hariputirwe.

Apa ndirikutaura nyaya yeHIV /AIDS, takanangana nepaMishando. Mukadzi uyu akazo pedza hake chikoro akatombo fundisa fundisa kwetumakore asi mhedzisiro yacho akazongo torwa naicho chirwere ichochi. Inini ndaitoziva hangu kuti nzira dzaifamba nevamwe vevanhu ivava, dzimwe dzacho dzaitiwo uyu afamba nekuseri kwegomo umwe wake ouya neyeparuware vozosanganawo voshandisa nzira yavaigadzira yekupfura nemubani, asi mhedzisiro yaizongove yekuenda kwa Mupfiganebwe. Ndizvo zvandaisanga nazvo pakushanda. Waitetena hawo zvishoma nezvishoma Mukondombera, uchitora vanhu kunyanya vechidiki vanova ndivo vaitenge vari kusimudzira nyika. Waisasarudza kana nepadiki pose waikwanhura varume nevakadzi pamwe pachu waiyeredza mhuri yese. Zvaitangira kumabasa asi zvozovika nekumba, mhedzisiro yacho yaizove yekuti mukondombera uye waitapukira munharaunda, nekuda kwekuti vadiwa vevashandi vaizoendawo vonozorana nevadiwa vavo kudzimba, vadiwa vava vasinawo unhu vopakurirawo vadiwa vavo. Raibva raita ziyenda-nakuenda, jira rambuya vangu risina mupendero.

Mumwe mukomana wandakadzidza naye kuchikoro kuGweru. Aive ari mukuru kwazvo kwandiri, akatembenge andidzidzisa, sezvo akambodzidzisa asina kudzidzira hudzidzisi kumusha kwedu. Aive murefu, munaku, aine chimiro chakagwinya, zvekuti vasikana vaitotsikirirana kuti dai ndanyengwa ndirini. Ndinowona zvakare kuti munhu akabva kumaruva osvika pachikoro chevaku, anenge azvimiririra, hapana mubereki anokubvunza sezvo uchigara pachikoro chevaku. Unobva waita mawiramombe netsika dzakasiyana siyana, ukasazvidzora unobva watopeperetswa nemhepo uchitevedzera kaunhu kepachikoro, kandingati ndekemu, kanyaniswa. Nekuda kwekuti vanhu vanenge vasangana kubva kumativimana enyika. Iwewe waakusangana nevasikana kana vakomana vabva zera, zvitsva kwauri kuti unogona kungobuda paruzhowa rwechikoro, madiro ugodzoka pawadira. Ukada kudzidzira kumwadoro ndiwe, ukada kusvuta fodya sevamwe ndiwe. Ukada kurezvana nemunhu wawada hapana anokudzivisa. Saka mukomana iyeyu akasangana nezvimwe zvezvinhu zvandareva pamusoro apo. Ndokuwanikwa avekuita semhashu kuti kwaenda mhepo ndikwo kwaino endawo.

Ndizvo zvisingade HIV izvozvo zvemunhu anotadza kuve neunhu ocherechedza kuti chinangwa changu chandakavinga paGTTC ndecheyi?. Unopedzesera, waiswa panjodzi nekuda kwerunako rwako. Mukomana uyu takanga tazosanganana paGTTC, gore ra 1991, takange tave kudzidza tese. Vaifara vakomana ivava, kumafaro kwatoita zveku shamisikawo nemafariro evakomana. Tichingopedza chikoro muna 1993, haana kuzombo pedza gore rakatevera ndiye sarai.

Sezvinonzi hazvina kunge zvakanaka, ndakasanganiswa zvekare nemumwe mukomana watakanga, takura tese kumusha, vakazotamira kumapurazi. Semunhu aizivana neHanzvadzi yangu, paakasvika paGTTC vakabva vaita kuti ndizivanewo naye. Tapedza chikoro zvakanaka naka, takanopinda basa kunzvimbo imwechete. Takabva tiri vashanu pachikoro, asi vana (vakomana vatatu neni, mumwe musikana wepiri akazoramba kushandira kwataive tanzi tiende nehurumende) ndivo vakazo shanda vese. Zvainakidza nekuti taive tabva tese paGTTC. Mukomana iyeye akazongotishande shandei ndokuzoshaika muna 1997. Ndakazenge ndabva pachikoro pandaishanda navo asati afa, akazosara ofa ndave kushanda pedyo neHarare.

Mumabasa, pese apa taingo vheneka vanhu nemeso tichingoona neutano hwavo, kunyanya vaizenge vabudikira urwere unooneka. Kazhinji taingo shandisa kakufungidzira kuti ndiyo AIDS bedzi nekuona munhu achirwara achifamba. Vanhu vaunoshanda navo kashoma kuti vakubudire

pachena kuti ndabatwa neutachiwana, zvinhu zvaizoonekwa nekuperezeka nekurwara rwara. Vanhu maibva maziva kuti zvamuwana. Asi kuti uchizonyatso udza kuti akawuwana sei utachiwana hwe HIV zvainetsa nekuti unenge usiri hweukama, kana kuti shamwari yepamwoyo. Saka vazhinji handina nhorondo dzavo dzakadzikadzika. Zvino rwadza kuti vanhu vaunoshanda navo mazuva ose, muchiita

zvinhu pamwechete. Vango dimburirwa upenyu hwavo panzira. Vanenge vatove kuita sehama dzako nekuti kazhinji uka temwa nemusoro, ndivo vanotoudza veukama hwako, nekuti munenge muchiswera kubasa mese. Kuenda nevana vechikoro kumitambo mese, kuronga zvebudiriro yepachikoro munenge mungori mese. Mamwe mavende aikonzera neMukondombera aito tadzisa zvikoro kubudirira nekuti, vamwe Vadzidzisi vaifa vane unyanzvi hwataive tisina, zvekuti sechikwata taisara taka nyenama. Pamwe pachopachopachona kuto dzikira pamukurumbira mudunhu kana mudzidzisi akabvutwa neMukondombera aive nyanzvi yekudzidzisa vana nhabvu semuyenzaniso. Maitogona kubva mapwa zvachose zvekuti hamaizo gona kumutsiva kuti mudzokere penyu pamai zivikanwa mudunhu, seshasha dzekutamba nhabvu. Zvaigona kurwadza isu vaishanda naye asi zvonyanyisa kurwadza kuvana vechikoro, avo vasingakwanise kuzoenderera mberi neku tapa unyanzvi hwaive nemushakabvu. Ramangwana remwana raitobva rakanganisika zvachose panedzimwe nguva. Vanhu vaifa wakatarisa, vanhu vamainge madzidza navo, mashanda navo, majairirana navo, mavaka ushamwari navo. Asi chainyanyisa kurwadza ndechekuti, vaifa makango tarisa pasina rubatsiro rwamaigona kuvapa sevadikani venyu. Zvimwe zvaikonzerwa nekuti kubasa haugone kugara pasi ugovaka ushamwari hunosvika pakuvimbana zvakadzama zvekusvika pakuudzana zvakananzika zveutano hwemunhu. Munhu waunoshanda naye haazogone kukuyeuchidza kumwa mushonga ari kwaari. Pamwe pachopachopachona kubasa kwaitotyisa kuti munhu asununguke kubuda pachena nekuti zvaigona kuzara chikoro chese munhu owanikwa ave kusemwa. Nekuti mazuva iwayo dzidziso yaive shoma kwazvo. Ndicho chimwe chikonzero chandinooona chaizoita kuti tinyano tadza kubatsira. Zvairema zvakare kuti ungosvikoti kumunhu wawaona semurwere. Nhawiwe une HIV here ndikubatsira nekukunyaradza. Munguva iyoyo zvaitofanana nekupumha munhu uroyi. Saka waitongo kuvarira mukati, uchiyeva urikure munhu achitambura nekurarama neutachiwana.

Ndinongo tenda Mwari kuti mugore ra2001, pakazoitawo munhu wandainzwanana naye pabasa, akavimba neni zvekundiudza. Zvakabatsira zvakananyanya nekuti ndaitogona kumbomu chingura nekunomutorera mapiritsi ake kana kungomu tandadza tichikurukura nekunyaradzana. Nhamo yemunhu ikataurwa inowanika ichitapudzika zvisvishoma kunyanya mukufunganya ne zvayo.

Munhu anorerukirwa kwazvo akawana wekuturira mitoro yeupenyu hwake. Zvamunoona, tingandoti hedu zvichida vadzidzisi nevamwe vashandi vakapera kuenda kuMarimuka, asi ukazvitarisisa vazhinji vakayeredzwa nemukondombera we HIV/AIDS. Chirwere ichochi chakato rakasha zvikuru nyanzvi dzikarova zvachose. Zvinove zvakadzorerwa nyika kumashure, kunyanyanyanya kuvandudzika kwe upfumi hwenyika. Zvichiburikidza nekudzidzisa vechidiki umhizha hwakasiyana siyana nyika ipi neipi inowana budiriro. Asi vechidiki vakafa vasina havasimudzira zvinodzoserawo nyika kumashure.

Vadzidzisi kunyanya vakashungurudzika zvikuru nekuda kwe nherera dzavaisara vakatarisana nadzo muzvikoro mushure mekufa kwevabereki. Chinonyano rwadza ndechekuti Mudzidzisi akaita seni une paunogumira kana uri pabasa, hauzokwanise kusvika kudzimba dzemhuri dzasiwa nevawaishanda navo, kuti upe rubatsiro, kana kuti uwongorore kuti vagere sei, mushure mekufirwa. Zvinokudya mwoyo kazhinji nekuti dzimwe nherera unozongoona vanyangarika pachikoro wotoziva kuti zvichida vatoendeswa kumusha, pamwe kana vari vanasikana vanenge vatoroodzwa vari vadiki, kuri kuyedza kunzvenga nzara inokonzerwa, nendufu dzinobva paHIV/AIDS. Vamwe vevana ivava vanenge vatori shasha chaidzo pazvidzidzo. Kutu uzoziva kuti zvafamba sei hauna maitiro. Vamwe vana ndivo vanosiiwa vachirwara, vaine utachiwana, kutu uzoziva kuti vanoriritirwa naani hauna maziviro. Kunyanya makore iwaya apfuura vaitopedzesera vasarira nhamo nematambudziko. Vamwe vaitozokasika kufa nekushaya rubatsiro.

Ukazocheredza nekuita tsvakurudzo, unooona kuti nherera dzaidzidza pedyo kana kuti dzaigara mudhuze nemaGuta dzaizowana rubetsero kubva kumaboka anomirira kodzero dzevanokanganiswa

neHIV/AIDS. Vekumaruwa vaizongo saririra nekuzongo tsakatika. Inyaya yairwadza wakaitarisa semushandi, uchiona utachiwana huchivhiringidza vamwe vashandi nemhuri dzavo. Ikodzero dzemwana wese kuti awane dzidzo, utano zvese neupenyu. Asi waizongo pererwa wakatarisa vana nevamwe vemumhuri vasara vachipera vese misha yoita matongo nekuda kweShuramatongo yeHIV/AIDS.

## **Stronger by Love not by Choice**

Hello, Dear Ladies and colleagues,

Wishing all of you and your families are healthy and safe in this challenging and strange situation for all humanity! In the following rendering, you will find some episodes of my chapter HIV positive life. My name is Olimbi Hoxhaj; resident in Albania, actually I am working as an Executive Director of the People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) Albanian Association. I live in Tirana and am an Economist by the first profession, and Psychotherapist and Specialist in Public Health as the following qualifications. I have been living with HIV for more than 25 years, am a mother of three HIV positive children, and since 2004 have engaged in the protection of Human Rights, focusing on the rights of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in Albania. I have been an initiator of institutional-level changes and promoted human resource protection for care, treatment, education, social protection, and services with my values. I have also taken up the position of vice-chair of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) on the Global Fund framework and have worked as a representative of Albanian Civil Society in all Regional and International bodies on HIV AND AIDS.

As a mother of three HIV positive children - living with HIV is more than just an existence for me. It is also about motivation, change, and pride. In my community of Albania, I am an extraordinary person and one of the silent 'heroines' because of the life I was able to achieve despite the stigma. To face the stigma and discrimination of HIV, I used all the possibilities starting from accepting the new journey of my life. For my family and community, I advocated for the need to adhere to treatment, have high self-esteem, keep seeking updated information and education, and manage one's psychological situation while using friends as an essential support system.

In order to face any meaningful aspect of HIV stigma and discrimination, my journey and that of my family started from: (i) accepting the new journey of my life; (ii) adhering to treatment; (iii) bolstering and investing in my self-esteem; (iv) staying informed and educated about developments in the treatment; (v) managing the psychological situation; (vi) using my friends as an important support system and, (vii) involving and developing myself professionally and personally.

I am classified in the category of “extraordinary people and the silent ‘heroes’” in daily life, for everything that I have done and represent for our community in Albania, which I would not have otherwise achieved. As the leader of the Association for the last 18 years, I have been proud of the New Law on Prevention and Control of HIV and AIDS in the Republic of Albania, approved by the Albanian Parliament in July 2008. There has been a revision of the National Strategy for HIV and AIDS, access to anti-HIV Medication, increasing standardization of regulatory models of care and support for HIV positive persons and their families. Further capacity building for HIV positive people; helped established numerous networks and services including: (i) the parents' network of HIV positive children; (ii) self-support groups for PLHIV; and (iii) psycho-social support services; provided adequate counselling services for Children Living with HIV (CLHIV), their families and adults living with HIV. Advocacy has also grown to guarantee and respect human resources for PLHIV, following national and international legislation; integration of prevention actions, including Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) Programme, Treatment as Prevention (TasP), testing for HIV and other STIs, and Post exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex (LGBTI) Community. My historical narrative inspiration is to provide lessons from the past because I am the only one who fights for the promotion and protection of PLWHA's human resources in Albania. My personal history became a pivot on realizing our rights for health. Life has been crucial for me. I lost my beloved husband, and later I learned

that my life was inextricably related to the HIV AND AIDS issues. The doctors hesitated to tell the truth, but it was disclosed that my husband had passed away from AIDS. My children and I were tested immediately: except for my daughter, they were all infected with HIV. The first effects were shocking. It is not easy to have a positive result on the HIV test. The first idea that came to my mind was that I would soon die. Although the world and its people surrounded me, all my being was focused on the things I love most. I was inseparably attached to my children and spiritually in this life and the consequences my children would face because I departed from this world. In addition, for a parent, the first idea is CHILDREN. Who is going to take care of my children? "Who?" All the inside war I was experiencing I would face alone. It was a psychological war. I have to admit that I was faced with either fighting or giving up, being fatal or challenging my destiny. It was an internal psychological war, associated with a long night without sleep and a lot of equilibrium lost in the first moments. "Fatality?" "No." I like to fight for my life. Even though sometimes life can be seen as very dirty and ugly, it is a fact that one can live only once, and it is worth living through that one chance. It is a new reality that I should accept and go ahead with in the future. I understand that life is filled with vicissitudes with a continuum dilemma between what I am in reality and what life is conditioning me to be. The only token support from the medical doctors was the test's positive result and the message: "Leave Albania immediately if you want to save your children's lives and that of yours because there is no treatment or/and care service for positive people". The only service offered at that time in Albania was just HIV testing. Here was the most challenging period of my life for me. I needed to find the antiretroviral medications privately and save the two twins from the tragic end. My family case was the first case of antiretroviral treatment in Albania for PLWHA, and there was an unprofessional environment from the medical doctors while facing these situations. I have faced stigma and discrimination in hospital environments.

The medical doctors stopped hoping for the life of one of the twins, but I believed and fought for my child's life.

She was alone in front of a hostile society and the merciless disease that wore down my immune system.

I decided to fight and challenge the disease, being the "sacrifice" of an entire community that deprives her of the right to enjoy life like everybody else. In these conditions,

I decided to fight for the lives of my children and mine in the name of a better future. It is not that I was not afraid of what was going to happen to me, but I did not think of myself in those moments seriously.

Some years before, my life was at a crossroads, with not that many alternatives. I started suffering from insomnia, going around the house up and down without finding the sleep I was looking for as the only moments of relaxation in my desperate situation, and the constant counting of my days could not get away from my mind.

I felt sorry for myself.

In the beginning, I would not even shed a tear, but soon sobbing throttled me. I felt emotionally empty, without life, full of anxiety and nightmares for tomorrow lost while I filled my mind with strange ideas without finding any solutions or some emotional unrest. One can only be strong, and maybe these tragic moments in our life transmit this power and prepare us to face the near future that we already know and the future that we never know what will serve us. I decided to direct my actions and interventions to improve the quality of life for PLWHA in Albania. In the name of all PLWHA living in Albania and the association I am leading, I have always promoted the right to health for PLWHA. ARV-s and other medical services have been available in Albania due to personal actions. This has been a critical action in revising the HIV and AIDS Law in Albania and other national and international Partners. My personal experience and

capacity in this field give me a precious potential to improve Albania's policies and legal framework related to HIV and AIDS issues. The new law on HIV and AIDS approved in 2008 by the parliament will have "my name" as a signature.

I have proven to be the one who fought and won the battle for human rights for the PLHIV in Albania. It turned my personal story into a flagship for human dignity and life. Being the only person in Albania openly LHIV, I am not afraid to go public and tell my story. I am willing to argue wisely about our rights with stakeholders and institutions, with courage beyond limits in society continuously being neglected and refused because of my HIV status. I have even received threats on my life after I insisted on registering my twin boys at school. My twins have been the first wave of change in the Albanian health system. They were the first who tried Anti-retroviral therapy and their effectiveness against HIV. At that time, I quit my job to tend to my children and family care. With much effort, I managed to get medicines through my friends from abroad at the cost of 2,400 EUR per month for each of the twins. Moreover, after 18 months, I started to receive free medications from the government. Occasionally, there were problems with getting regular supplies or reimbursements, but I was adamant that HIV and AIDS is not a health issue. "Above all, it is a social issue," I insisted. I was troubled by the hostile environment in Albania against HIV infected people because of bias and lack of information. She does not even hide her concern about the integrity of her children at school, following the intense pressure from other students' parents. After surviving the AIDS fatality, the twins were expelled from kindergarten. For two years, the kindergarten director refused to admit my children to the pre-school facility. In vain, I wrote letters, knocked on ministry doors, or made public statements; no one took the pains to help me. The Albanian legislation stipulates that HIV-infected children be entitled to attend the same educational facilities as their peers. "It is a nice piece of legislation, which has not been implemented, however," I said, frustrated in some declaration. If the law had been implemented, it would not have taken my children more than two weeks to be admitted to a school. I would not have been alone in the confrontations with a group of adults demanding to take my children away from that school, as they firmly believed that my children would infect their children when they would frequent the same class. The presence of physicians who had gone there to inform the other parents did not prevent the river of offensive words from flowing toward me. Really, at the time, I was even threatened.

A sentence by one of the parents still haunts me: "Take your children with you and kill yourselves, all of you, and leave our children and us alone". That hurt, but I did not budge. "It is part of our lives now. We face this kind of mindset every step we take," I thought. It was tough because I live in a reality where nobody will accept that his or her child has to sit in the same bench with an HIV positive infected child. These were some of the extreme reactions, even though parents never understood it until they had the right to talk.

We talk about rights and freedom, but this freedom is not limited to a particular group or individuals. The freedom and rights of everyone are limited where the other ones start. My children should enjoy the right to education the same way other children enjoy it, and I should profit from the public services as the others do because I pay the taxes like others in the community where I live. The problem started when they made the situation public. This situation was associated with a selfish attitude from the parents. It is OK that they have to take care of their children, but I have to do the same with mine. I have the right to take care of my children because I am a parent as they are. Besides the interferences in my private life, I was insulted by their words and offences addressed to me. I was self-possessed and did not react in those moments, not because I was not feeling sorry for me or I did not have good arguments, but because they were irritated and almost unmanageable. Thus, I decided to offer them the necessary knowledge - that their children were not at risk because of the cohabitation in the same classroom or school with HIV positive children - through the institutional representatives and the HIV and AIDS specialists. "If there was a Guinness record for

patience, you would have won it," my elder daughter—the only person in the family not infected with HIV exclaimed. Three months after being registered in Elementary School, the schoolyard was buzzing with the parents' protests against their classmate's demanding expulsion from the school. For three months, their case was the headline on News editions, newspapers and magazines. I was fighting for all. An institutional reaction meant that it was worthwhile for the entire community. These actions helped clarify that tomorrow nobody can dare claim the expulsion of children from schools, despite their health status or the dismissal of teachers because they are HIV positive. I transform their story into a positive regional experience of CLHIV education and inclusion. Their daily lives changed the view, perception of reality, and community behaviour from "frightening ghosts" to the normality of existence twins coupled with excellence and performance. Their qualitative and distinct moral and human virtues were elevated to suffering, contempt, isolation, distancing, neglect, all the darker sides of human ignorance because of lack of knowledge and information. They set a precedent for CLHIV, and now they are 20 years old with maximum results, so-called "excellent student with HIV", like the second surname, studying at the University of Medicine here in Albania.

A significant civil society involvement is considered an essential partner in the war against HIV and AIDS, thus I am engaged and became an active member of national, regional and international forums and activities because I understand the need. I strongly demanded that the stakeholders in my country hear the children's voices and the voices of all the Albanian HIV+ people. Their stories would humanize them, as everything we say and do is part of life's spirit, pains, and love. It is also a continuous daily effort to manage the virus, live with dignity, self-esteem, and equality, just being HIV positive people.

My story and the issue seem to be quite complex. They are closely related to health, education, and religious belief, the culture of a relatively conservative society, old and new mentalities, and a list of other things.

Before, it was difficult to introduce myself as an HIV positive person. Now, this has changed even my perception. I put some rules and standards in my life to accept HIV as a fact, because now it is real, it does exist. Society has to accept the reality of HIV. Society should accept that this natural phenomenon exists, and let us find the opportunities and ways to face it and find solutions for the problems related to HIV AND AIDS.

Nineteen years ago, I was a relatively fragile woman. A happy woman with a normal life, as everybody – where family constituted the essence of my being and existence. I never thought that I would face such a situation and that my "shoulders" could carry such a weight. I can quickly tell that the others made my life more difficult than I thought. I belonged to that category of people who believed that there are friends and relatives out there who will never abandon you when you most need them. You will never be alone. Nevertheless, it happened differently. Their deviousness devastated me, although it was not vital to me. One can afford life with its strength, but I was used to believing that others are a vital part of my life. I thought I was fragile, and I asked for kindness, support and protection from others. Now not anymore. Now I understand and know that one has to work hard in life and never give up. The fear, hardship, and suffering I have inside me made me brave. I am not pretending to be someone in this life, but I am sure of something – I am bringing some change through my life history, although it can be considered a small change. In the beginning, my mind analysed any behaviour and attitude of others toward me. I thought I had a particular psychological weight that I did not know where to unburden.

Often, I suffered from insomnia, and the dolour inside of me was growing. After I understood that, nothing good would come from such an attitude. I gave up on this attitude, became indifferent, and ignored negative situations. This made me concentrate on what is essential to me: my life and my family. I understood that

the only weapon I had, if I wanted to go ahead, was being indifferent toward this killing reality. Now I enjoy everything in all the moments, any happy moment in my life, although they could be temporary. Already for me, HIV is classified as one of the best things that have ever happened to me in my life. My life continues to be difficult because I have to make choices and make important life decisions, as a single parent, HIV-positive woman, and mother of HIV-positive children. However, through my diagnosis, I have found and empowered myself. I have found strength, courage, a voice, and a happy inner call to be motivated to live.

What is interesting related to living with HIV is that your status affects you in different ways, and you start to change how you live, how you think, and the overall you. HIV, in the beginning, tended to have a dark side to me, but after a while, I found that it was nothing but a part of my motivational process. In the end, I am a healthy and happy person with an HIV+ status, but living and enjoying my life and my family. I recall the beautiful moments we have been through as a family, and the moments of happiness and joy. We have only memories from the past, and when they are beautiful, you understand that life was valuable to you, making you feel good about yourself and find some rest. We even today have many beautiful and happy moments together. I see joy and happiness in my children's eyes.

### **Olimbi Hoxhaj bio**



Olimbi Hoxhaj is the Executive Director of the Albanian Association of Persons Living with HIV and Aids. She is a powerhouse and has done so much. Her qualifications include: specialist in HIV and AIDS, Human Rights, Public Health, Community Development, and Program Evaluation and Development. She has been a Coordinator, Lecturer, Economist, and Psychotherapist. She is a Consultant and member of the following working groups: (i) the review of the National AIDS Strategy, the Review of Albanian (ii) Legislation on prevention and control of HIV, (iii) the sub-legal acts implementing the law on HIV and AIDS, (iv) the Development of the Global Fund Concept Note, (v) the development the Strategic Plan for NPCD Association, (vi) the development of Clinical Guidelines for the testing, care, treatment and follow up of adults infected with HIV, (vii) the development of Clinical Guidelines for the testing, care, treatment and follow up of children infected with HIV, and (viii) drafting the Declaration of the Key Population Community Living with or affected by HIV, Paris, July 2017. She is the Civil Society Representative for the development of the PMTCT for HIV action plan and has trained Medical Staff at Health Centers, Psychologists and Social Workers

## **I am Lily by Lily**

“The young man that you have brought I don’t see any future with him. You are still too young to get married. I see you getting married to a tall dark man who is a drunkard, he is the one who will pay the bride price for you if you pray earnestly. This one that you have at this congregation just let him be because I see him infecting you in the near future let him go.”

My name is Lily, I am 40 years old. So the above is an excerpt of what used to happen at our church, Johanne Masowe Echishanu. If you were dating someone, the requirement was that you would go with him to the elders and they would give you a prophesy confirming his intentions regarding marriage. I had taken my boyfriend from Chinhoyi to the church elders in 2002 and I was given that prophesy. I was hurt by it but there was nothing I could do because this was our church custom. This is important for me to explain how I’m living with the disease and also how I got infected. Growing up I wasn’t a naughty child. My parents were very strict, and my mum would beat you very hard if you ever misbehaved. We had a rule that no one comes home after 6 pm so this helped to keep me in check. When I finished my Ordinary (O) Levels (high school qualification based on the British Education system), in 1998, I went to stay with my sister. My sister is the one who went to Johanne Masowe church which helped me a lot because at their church there were rules and it was rare to hear stories of fornication because it would be announced to the whole church and you would be shamed publicly and as a result I stayed a long time without a boyfriend. I stayed with my sister for 2 years and then went back to live with my mum in the rural areas. At the time my father was working and living at Mhangura mine where I was born and went to school. The mine was closed in 2000 and my father remained at the mine and I went with my mother to live at our rural home when I came back from my sister’s in Harare.

Life was very difficult. I would help my mother with household chores like building going to the field, and this is what led me to look for work in Kariba and send money to help my mother with her bills. I worked 2001 and 2002 as a maid in Kariba at a teacher’s house. There was a year that there was no food because of drought I remember a guy I that I went to school with passed by the house where I was working and he said we should not worry about food because he was working and he had maize so he asked the people I worked for, for me to follow him so that he could give me maize. Since he was someone I had gone to school with, who had lived in the same neighborhood as me, I never imagined he would do anything untoward to me so I accompanied him to his place - how wrong I was! We went together, arrived at his home and indeed he had maize. He weighed out 2 buckets for me then said he wanted to get me something to eat. He came back with some biscuits and a drink. The drink tasted strange, as if it had a substance in it. I drank it and then I became intoxicated and he raped me. This was a very painful experience in my life, I went back explained to the people I lived with whom I regarded as parents, what had happened. They called the guy to question him and told him that they were going to report him to the police. He begged them not to and said that he loved me and wanted to marry me the only problem was that he was already married so he wanted to make me his second wife.

I thought how I was young at 19 to get married and I also thought how I was not in love with him that he had raped me so I refused. The issue never got to the police the people I worked for covered it up, I went to the hospital where I was checked and was treated for a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and I was given an injection and some pills to take. It took me 2 years to recover from this trauma I was afraid of men even to be touched I had fear in my mind. When the issue happened I left work and went to stay with my father’s brother, life there was difficult. I looked for work and I got a job as a shop assistant. I worked for about 2 years then met a man that I started dating till we got to a point where we wanted to get married, and from out of the blue appeared a woman claiming that she was married to the guy. A fight broke out, and that is when I met the man I now call my husband - he was the one who mediated between us and we resolved the issue. He started asking me out saying “why are you fighting over a married man look at me

I'm 28 and I'm single why not got out with me?" but because I had a lot going on I refused his proposal I moved away and stayed with my friend got a job at a place called Landela Safaris in Kariba.

So this guy kept on pursuing me and we dated here and there. The problem that came which I noticed late is every time I had sex with him I would contract an STI, I spoke to him about it once and he would he say he did not understand why. It was now my responsibility to seek treatment at the hospital. Now this happened so many times until he said since it now appeared like he was the cause of the STI he suggested we live together since it looked like I was accusing him of something that wasn't his fault. He said he had the money so really there wasn't any reason not to.

I was very happy since I was now an adult 23 years of age and also it was a confirmation of what I was told that other year at church that I would get married and have my own house. We planned on meeting up relatives and paying the bride price. We were planning this together, saving the money for the bride price negotiations at my parent's house. Anyway due to work commitments my boyfriend could not get time off to go see my parents so I went myself to tell my parents of our plans for marriage.

When things are destined to go wrong they will just go wrong no matter what. Coming from my parents' house I did not have enough money to go straight to work but managed to get to Kariba, then bumped into my boyfriend who convinced me to wait for him and he would drive me to work so we spent the day together. Let me call him Emmanuel... Like I said we spent the day together like what other couples do. We even went out to a certain place and spent the whole day there together having fun.

We were now in 2003, so on our date we planned to elope. Emmanuel had already planned a while back to introduce me to his relatives and friends without my knowledge. I was surprised when I heard him explaining to his relatives about his plan to elope citing that he could no longer live on his own. That is how I got married. When my parents heard about it they were not happy, they were mad and insisted I come back from my husband's house. They wanted me to further my education saying they had already found a place for me at a nearby school. I thought about it and also concluded that leaving this man and going back home to wear a school uniform again at my age was not a good idea, so I refused to go back. So I sent word to my parents to say I was not coming back, and was happy where I was. In addition, I was worried that I might be pregnant. Married life is something that every woman desires so I made up my mind to face whatever comes.

At first we were happy with my husband, I was someone who was determined to make my marriage work and make sure my children had the same surname. I didn't plan on failing in marriage because I believed that for you to be a woman you have to be married that is the only thing I felt gave you dignity in the community. I got pregnant with my first child, a baby girl who is turning 17 this year 2022. I started to notice my husband's philandering behaviour. He loved women, and this caused us to fight a lot. His behaviour resulted in different types of women small, big, short, and tall coming to my house. It was evident that he was intimate with these women as some of them were very aggressive towards me and stressed me out. It came as no surprise that the time I got pregnant I also got an STI.

With my first pregnancy I really went through some difficulties dealing with injections for the STI while also experiencing morning sickness. Given it was my first pregnancy I didn't know what to expect. Throughout my pregnancy I had repeated STI infections living in a vicious cycle of infection and treatment, because Emmanuel was constantly being re-infected by other women. What I do remember is I went through hell - things that a parent should not have to go through and suffered from depression as a result. When I got married I was a buxom good-looking girl but because of the problems I was facing in my marriage I lost so much weight. Before I was married I weighed about 80 kg but because of the abuse and challenges I was facing I my marriage I went down to about 46 kg in my first year of marriage. I still stayed in the marriage until I was about 8 months pregnant. While we were busy preparing for me to go to my

parents' house so I could give birth from there as is customary, I gave birth prematurely. I could not afford to go to the doctor for pre-natal visits so I was not sure of my due date. I gave birth to my baby girl on 3 February 2004 before we even finalized arrangements for me to go to my parents' house. The coming of my first child gave me so much joy, I thanked God I was able to hold my own baby. I had been tested and found negative, I gave birth to a healthy baby. I had lost weight I was looking like a child because of the STIs I had during my pregnancy.

Anyway I gave birth when I was still living with Emmanuel. His mother was very loving and she taught me how to look after a newborn baby - how to bath her, how to breastfeed her until I could do these on my own. When my baby was only 10 days old I developed a lump on my breast, I thought it was because of how my baby was suckling. I went to the hospital and they confirmed it was a lump, and that's when another battle started. I was given medication to disperse the lump but it didn't work. I was in so much pain because of this lump that I ended up being hospitalized with my baby and was there until my baby turned 6 weeks old. They ran some tests to ascertain what type of lump it was. The doctors couldn't diagnose what type of lump it was and decided to operate. Life was now difficult for me because I was thinking if I get operated what if I do not wake up what will happen to my newborn baby so I refused to get operated on and told them I would deal with the consequences whatever they maybe, I was then discharged from the hospital. The people from my husband's side decided that I should go back to my parents and have them see the child maybe things would get better with me.

I took my things and my child then went to live in the rural areas with my parents and my breast was fine then I started to breastfeed again. I breastfed my child until she was 9 months then at 9 months my daughter started walking I was so happy then I went back to my husband's house, I was just being hopeful because I wanted my marriage and loved my husband though living with him was very difficult. I was now faced with a challenge where my husband was not supporting us financially, forcing me to steal from him when he was drunk. I also lived a life where I was beaten, shouted at and lived without food, and yet I stayed because I wanted and loved my husband. My life was one where I would steal money and buy somethings for resale hoping that if I contributed in the household maybe my husband would want to work on our marriage, but it wasn't so. I stayed with him from 2004 until 2006. When the child was 9 months I got pregnant again but had a miscarriage at three months. When I went to the doctor for them to clean my womb and I found I was pregnant again for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time and had another miscarriage. Some people advised me to use contraceptives which I used until my daughter was 2 years old, and decided that I wanted another child. I fell pregnant for the fourth time, and during that time my husband was gallivanting with a prostitute who lived near me forcing me to compete for his attention. It was hard but I persevered because I loved my husband and also I was thinking about my child.

During my fourth pregnancy I was going to church the apostolic sect praying following instructions I would be given. When I was 7 months pregnant the other woman who was dating my husband came to see me. She had been abandoned by her husband who had run away with another woman leaving her to fend for their two children., In all this, what bothered me is that the HIV disease was something people did not talk about it as it was considered a taboo even though it was clear to see when someone was infected, as was the case with the 2<sup>nd</sup> child of that woman which had clear signs of failure to thrive and was the talk of the neighborhood. I wish I had the knowledge I have now back then because I would have immediately known. During my fourth pregnancy that woman came to my house and told me to my face that Emmanuel was her husband and they were never going to break up. She also said that I would die during child birth. I did not take those words lightly. I went to church and told them what she said and the spiritual elders present told me to take her words seriously, and advised me to move until after my baby was born. So I moved and together with my husband we lived at my uncle's house until the baby was born. There were some complications before labour but through prayers I was able to deliver the baby safely. I gave birth to a son whom I named Emmanuel Audios. I think just a day after delivery that is when another problem started. I fell sick and could not understand why. I went to all the faith healers, and witch doctors until finally I went

to the hospital where I was told I was HIV positive but my CD4 count was high and during those times they would not put you on medication if your CD4 was high. My concern was for my son. Of course curses exist, and evil spirits exist but my husband had never been tested and also I had not used protection. I looked after my child even though I was sick and I only got better when he was about 6 months old. At that time my husband committed a crime at work and was arrested. We had to sell our properties so that we could pay the bail. On the day that he was released I was admitted into Parirenyatwa Hospital. My son's feet and hands were painful so I was in hospital with my child. The doctors thought that maybe it might be because my child was lacking food, but I had breastfed him for 6 months and weaned him when I found out I was positive. My child got really sick until he was producing black faeces. I told the church elders and they said that is what happens when a child is sick, this happened for about 3 days until some veins were blocked and my son passed away it was the fourth child that I had lost, and I was only left with one child. I came back home and buried the child. My husband lost his job after the court proceedings. At church I was told to forgive my husband and let go of pain so that he might be able to get a job and I forgave him for all he had done. He went to Harare and found work there and forgot all about me and our daughter. He never sent any money and I had to pay rent. The landlord was now on my case for rent and water bills so I started buying and selling stuff so that I could afford these. We stayed alone for 6 months and then I followed to Harare because I missed my husband. We started living together in Harare. My husband had not stopped being promiscuous or beating me up or not giving me money, this became my life.

So the vicious cycle continued. In 2012 my husband got retrenched, leaving me as the sole bread winner. At that time I became pregnant with my 5<sup>th</sup> pregnancy then had a miscarriage at 3 months. . In all life did not change in our marriage the times that I was happy were very few and far between. My husband continued abusing me. He would beat me up insulting the way I dressed, my cleanliness telling me I did not know how to bath. As someone who was in the apostolic sect I was not allowed to wear certain clothes but because of the time I had spent with my husband and his abuse, I started believing my husband cheated because I dressed conservatively. I changed my dressing and started to wear shorts, miniskirts and sleeveless tops, fix my hair and wear makeup. I was abused to the point that I started drinking alcohol. The year I changed my dress style is the same year I got pregnant with my son.. I worked throughout my pregnancy as my husband was unemployed. I gave birth to a boy and named him Tawananyasha. Everything went well during labour. I followed what the doctor's instructions as, I was still not yet on ART, and I was given medication to prevent the baby from contracting HIV. The Doctors advised they would do regular checkups on my womb every time I went for review.

When I had given birth to my child I refused to breastfeed because I thought breastfeeding and infecting the baby would ensue as I believed that's what happened the last time I lost a child. The doctors tried to counsel me but I refused to breastfeed. I got home fixed a bottle for my child and the next day he woke up vomiting we went with him to Harare hospital. He was put on oxygen and on one occasion he stopped breathing. The nurses and the matron at the hospital sat me down to explain that before we could not breastfeed because there was not any medication, but now that medication is available you can breastfeed for 6 months, and do not feed him anything else. I started giving my child an antibiotic (cotrimoxazole) and following everything else I was told at the hospital. Unfortunately his health was not good so I spent a lot of time at the hospital with him. When I went for the 6 weeks review the baby was tested and was found to be negative and I continued breastfeeding at 6 months he was tested again and he was found negative and they said they told me to introduce solids in his diet. I was still giving him medication which they said I should do until I weaned him. I followed everything the doctors said, and at 18 months he was tested and was found to be ok. This was a time of great joy because although I am positive I was able to give birth to a negative child.

The month that I weaned my son is the same month that my husband got sick. My husband was in denial because every time I told him about being positive he would say "You are the one found positive not me, I'm fine I don't feel sick." He was riddled with fever and had pimples on his body and one day he collapsed. The day that he collapsed I was not even around as I had accompanied my aunt, my father's sister, to the

hospital because she had defaulted in her HIV medication. Upon returning home I took him to the hospital. Tests revealed that his CD4 count was 7. During this strenuous time, my CD4 count dropped to 244. We were counseled and given medication. My husband then presented with cerebral tuberculosis (TB) and malaria and his CD4 count was low. I had to take him home with me because there was no money for him to be admitted into hospital so we took him home and he was treated as an out patient. His relatives and friends would come some to gossip and mock us which had me crying for most of the time – this was around 2014. My husband was very ill and my parents took my children to ease my burden of being the primary caregiver as I could not cope with looking after everyone. My son was 18 months and he was tested for TB and found negative and also for meningitis he was also negative but they put him on treatment because he was staying with someone who had TB. My mum took the kids and went to stay with them in the rural areas and I was left to take care of my husband, mopping up his vomit, and his faeces as well as bathing him. He was a very contentious patient but I persevered because he was my husband whom I loved. I looked after him for 2 years and that's when he became better.

Once he was better, I looked for work so I could earn a living for our upkeep. I found a job in Harare as a maid and I was looking after a woman who had had a stroke and had two sons. After having worked for a week I mustered enough courage to ask what had caused her stroke. She explained to me that she and her husband were a discordant couple, she was HIV positive and her husband and their sons were negative. Her husband had infected her with HIV and I think the betrayal and hurt made her give up on life. I shared my story with her and opened up regarding the medication I was on as well. I asked her what medication she was taking. She was not on any anti-retroviral meds. I felt sorry for her so I took her to a nearby clinic and they refused to help us then I went with her to a private hospital who wrote a referral letter to go to Harare hospital where they referred us to New Start Clinic (a clinic that specializes in HIV testing and treatment), so that she could be tested for TB and her CD4. This lady was beautiful but she could not walk and could only crawl. I took it upon myself to nurse her back to health. If I could do it with my husband, I could do it with her. I helped this lady until she was able to do laundry and clean her house and made sure she took her medication properly but her relatives did not like how I was helping her, especially when I was doing exercises with her, they felt I was abusing her. I had to leave and go back to my husband.

My husband got a job and I went to take the children from the rural areas. I started my business of selling fish, me doing my thing my husband doing his own and we would meet half way looking after our children. My husband got to a point where he said the money he was making was too little and he suggested to move to another place to look for a better job, I did not argue with that so he went to Victoria Falls and I was left in Harare with the children and I did a course as a nurse aid while continuing with my selling business looking after my children. I lived alone for 2 years then questioned why I was living the life of a widow while my husband was still alive, so I followed him to Victoria Falls. Unfortunately, his behavior had not changed. I thought that after all we had gone through, the challenges we faced he would have grown up. When I got to Vic Falls I discovered he was still doing the same old things. He still beat me up, he still did not give me money for upkeep and he was still promiscuous. I tried to endure and stayed for about 6 months then realized I would die of hunger with my children but I did not have enough money to go back to Harare so I looked for work and started working in a shop. I worked there for about 2 months and the Corona pandemic happened and I was laid off work. In marriage things were not well. We were constantly fighting, shouting at each other up to a point where I left everything even the children for a whole month and lived in Harare but I was heartbroken so I came back to my husband. But my husband had not changed his ways, I looked for work again where I worked as a bar lady. I was now able to afford buying clothes for myself send my children to school and eat what I wanted which caused my husband to be jealous and we started fighting again. That is when I decided to move out and have my own place where I now stay with my children, I eat what I want. I'm also thinking of starting my own business and building my own house.

Being HIV positive is not the end of the world. As ladies when we are abused in our marriages if you try to tell relatives they will tell you to deal with it and persevere! This is such difficult advice because yes you

want your marriage to work and you working hard on it, but then someone is promiscuous and brings HIV into the home. There are very few men that accept this status or who even want to be tested! It is painful. Some men are just difficult and you cannot change them. I advise the young women in abusive marriages not to tolerate it, While most women want to be married, it should not be at all costs. It is better to look for work, look after yourself get yourself your own money even if you are HIV positive you can still live without stress. What kills more people who are HIV positive is stress, especially when you have an abusive husband who does not meet his family financial obligations and who might at times even refuse to be intimate with you., Stress exacerbates infections if you are HIV positive. It is then easier for one to get cervical cancer; have high Blood Pressure or diabetes, made worse by an abusive husband. As ladies let's rise; let's encourage each other, lets unite! Yes, everyone wants to be loved, I have hope that I will find someone who will love me as I am and give me the love I never got from my husband.

### **Lily Bio**

Lily is a living testimony to life and an entrepreneur.

## **Kubva Kumahombekombe Edziva reKariba Kusvika KuMapopoma eVictoria Falls Ndiri Murudo Rwuchirwadza by Lily**

"AmuDzidzi, uyu Mukomana wamauya naye handina kuona chineupenyu pamusoro pake. Muchiri mudikisa, mucharoorwa henyu. Ndaona maroorwa nemurume murefu mutema chidhakwa chekubhawa, chisingabude mubhawa. Asi mukagona kunamata ndaona ari ndiye achabvisa pfuma kumusha kwenyu. Uyu wamuri kufambidzana naye pano pasangano, handina kuona paine imba yamisikidzwa. Ndaona pamberi apo matsvagirwa chirwere cheniyika, siyanai naye hakuna chinobuda."

Zita rangu rekuberekwa ndinonzi Lily pandaive ndichiri musikana ane makore makumi maviri (20) izvi ndizvo zvaitwa paChinamato chandinonamata che Jahone Masowe weChishanu. Taiti ukaita Mukomana wawainge uchi fambidzana naye, waienda naye pasangano raunonamata wovhenekwa nemaPorofita pasowe wopihwa tsanangudzo dzako, kana uchiroorwa vokuudza kuti unoorwa kana usingaroorwe vokuudza zvekare.

Ndakanga ndaenda nemukomana wandai fambidzana naye mugore ra 2002 kuChinhoyi ndiine tarisiro yekuroorwa. Ndokusviko pihwa tsananguro dzinorema dzinorwadza sezvo ndaitatisira kuroorwa. Asi chekuita paive pasina, ndakanga ndatevedzera murawo wekuMasowe kwedu.

Regayi nditsanangure kuti kurarama neutachiwana, kwakadiyi uye kuti zvakandiwana sei.

Ndakakura ndirimusikana akanga asina misikanzwa zvichienderana nekuti vabereki vakanga vakamira sei. Amai vangu vairova zvekurova zviya, ndaitya kurohwa. Uye taipihwa mutemo uya wekuti hapana mwana aisvika pamba kwavira, nguva dzenhanhatu dzadarika. Saka mikana yekuti ndibude ndigo kwanisa kunosangana nevakomana waisatombo wanikwa.

Mugore ra1998 ndipo pandakapedza chidzidzo chegwaro repamusoro rechina (Form 4). Ndakazo tanga kugara neMukoma wangu kuguta guru reHarare. Mukoma, ndivo vaipinda Kereke yekuMasowe yandambo reva kwandaka pihwa tsananguro neMufemberi wezvichauya. Mazuva iwayo, makore iwayo zvaiyera, hupombwe hwaisave nyore. Wai simudzwa paruzhinji pasowe wofumurwa. KuJohane Masowe kwaive nemitemo yaitadzisa vechidiki kuita hupombwe nekuda kwekuti, waizo vhenekwa paMweya wofumurwa pazere vanhu hunhu hwako hwakaipa. Zvakandi batsira kwazvo sezvo magariro iwaya aindi chengetedza ndiri mhandara yakazara.

Kare ikako kwaisaitwa zvedambe, waigona kusimudzwa paMasowe ugofumurwa nekunyadziwa pazere vanhu. Saka ndakatora mwaka yakawanda nenguva ndisina mukomana wandai fambidzana naye. Zvisinei igaroziva kuti mukurarama, mune zvinoitika zvinowoma zvinorwadza. Ndakagara kwemakore maviri naivo Mukoma, ndokuzo dzokera kuvabereki. Ndadzokera kuvabereki, ndakasviko wana Amai vadzokera kunogara kumusha.

Ndakabva ndango vateverawo nekuti kuenda kwavo zvakabva pakuti Mugodhi weMhangura Mine kwaishanda Baba, wakanga wavharwa mugore ra2000.

KuMugodhi weMhangura ndiko kwandakanga ndazvarirwa ndikakurira. Saka pandakabva kuHarare kwandaigara neMukoma wangu ndakasviko pfuurira kumusha kwaive kwaenda Amai vangu. Kahupenyu kekumusha hakajairike kagara kanongo rwadza. Hupenyu hwairema, asi ndakagara ndichibatsirana naAmai, tichirima zvese nekuvaka. Chainetsa imari yekuti kurima kwacho kunyatsove ne pundutso, saka ndakazvi cherechedza ndikaona kuti zvirinani ndinotsvaga basa.

Ndaka tsanangurira Amai pfungwa yangu ndikava kumbira kuti ndiende kunotsvaga basa zvinove zvaizo batsiridza mararamiro edu. Kariba ndiro guta randaiona riri pedyo uye kwaigona kuwanika mabasa nyore. Amai havana kupikisa havo sezvo ndakavimbisa kutumira kari kese kamari kandaizo wanawo. Ndakazo simudzirana nerwendo rweku Kariba uko ndakasvika wana basa remumba. Kwaiva kupera kwegore ra2000 mupaka 2001.

Ndaka shandira mumwe mudzimai aive Mudzidzisi, ndikagara kusvika kwazoita gore renzara. Takambo kwangwaya nayo nzara nyika yese, zvakakonzerwa kuti nesuwo tishaye upfu chaihwo mumba.

Ndakazoita mahwekwe, nemumwe mukomana wandakanga ndakura naye ndikadzidza naye.

Mukomana uyu aka katyamara nenzara yataiva tiinayo mumba. Akatinzwira tsiye nyoro akati kuna Mai vandaigara navo, hamungafe nenzara ndiripo, sezvo aiti anowana chibage cheupfu. Akakumbira kuti vanditendere kuenda kumba kwake Mukomana iyeyu. Munhu wandaivimba naye handina chakaipa chandai mufungira. Ndaka bvumidzwa naAmai vandaishandira kuenda nemukomana uya.

Takaenda ndikasvika pimirwa mabhagidhi maviri zvechokwadi, ndika nyemwerera nemufaro. Handina kuziva kuti ndaiva ndateyewa nemavara sezvinoita nyoka iya inonzi shato.

Ndakanzi chimira zvishoma ndikutsvagire chikafu, ndikatoti hekani waro. Ukama igasva hunozadziwa nekudya. Ndakavigirwa chimwiwa nema bhesikiti aneruwomba. Hapana mwanasikana asingadi zvakadai, asi pandaimwa chimwiwa ndakaita sendanzwa kakusanyatso tapira kechimwiwa, zvichiita sekuti pane kamushonga kaiswa imomo.

Semunhu aive nenyoka dzemudumbu dzaito chemawo nzara, pfungwa yacho yekuti chimwiwa chaive nekakuvavira ndakazodzi rasira kumararo. Ndaka gundurutsa chimwiwa chiya wanike ndave kuita sendadhakwa. Handina kuzomboziva zvandaive ndiri kubva ipapo.

Mukomana uya akabva atora mukana weku pedzisa tsoro yake akandibhinya, ndipo pandakabva ndarasikirwa nehumhandara hwangu hwandai vimba nahwo zvakanyanya.

Ndakarwadziwa ndikachema pamberi pevandai shandira vanova vandaitorawo semubereki.

Mukomana uya akazo shevedzwa akauya akabvuma kuti zvedi aive aita zvaakaita neni uye aida kundiita mudzimai wake. Akatanga kunyepera kuti anondida. Aka demba kuti nyaya isasvike kumapurisa. Asi paive nechipingaidzo chimwechete chekuti aive nemukadzi nechekare. Zvichireva kuti nehvana hudiki hwangu ndaizoenda pachipare. Ndaive nemakore gumi nepfumbamwe bedzi. Ndaka rwadziwa ndatarisana nehupenyu hwepabarika, kuparikwa nemunhu wandisina kumbodanana naye. Bhinya remakoko irori.

Ndakaona zvisina kukodzera. Nyaya yakazo tsikwatsikwa, ndikazo endeswa ku Chipatara kunorapwa. Zvakanoobuda kuti ndapihwa chirwere chepabonde nairo bhinya irori. Ndakabaiwa hangu majekiseni nekupihwa mapiritsi, ndikarapwa ndikapora, zvikadarika.

Zvakanditorera makore maviri ndichitya ndisingadi kana kugumhwa nemunhurume. Ndaivhunduka ndika sangana nemunhurume pedu tega. Mushure mechiitiko ichocho handina kuda kuzomboramba ndichashandira Amai vaya. Ndaka suduruka ndokuenda kunogara naBabamukuru mukoma waBaba.

Ndakagara hangu naBabamukuru nemhuri yavo asi pakanga pasina kunyatso sununguka nekuti taive takawandisa. Semunhu aive ajaira kuzvishandira, ndakatsvaga rimwe basa ndokuwana remuChitoro.

Ndakatanga kushanda zvangu zvakana makore maviri ese.

Ndakazo sangana nemumwewo mukomana akandipfimba ndikazobvuma, kuti ndiedze kufambidzana nevanhurume. Takadanana hedu zvakana, akatoti ave kudakundi bvisira roora kwaperu mwedzi ine chitsama.

Ndatotarisa kuroorwa pakabva pabudikira mumwe mukadzi akati mukomana wandaiti wangu aive murume wake. Pakaitika bvongamupopoto, nemhirizhonga zvese. Pakave nebatai mukobvu batai mutete nyaya yacho ikatsviriridza. Basa ndikatombo miswa. Ndichiri mukushushikana ndakabva ndasangana nemumwewo mukomana akanditi ko unotsvireiko kana svutugadzike isina tsvigiri? Siyana nemunhu

wemunhu. Akanditsvetera achiti, chida ini ndiri mukomana anemakore makumimaviri nemasere(28), handina mukadzi uye hapana achakuronda.

Mukomana uyu ndiye akazounza runyararo pakati pangu nemudzimayi uya wandakarwisana naye. Ndiye akazove zvekare murume wangu.

Asi panguva iyoyi semunhu aive nekaku shungurudzika nekuvhiringika uye ndichizvi dzikisira, nekuda kwezviitiko zvaingoramba zvichiitika nenzira dzisakarurama mukati mekurarama kwangu, ndakanonoka kumubvuma. Ndakanga ndave kutya kuita mawira mombe nerudo rwake. Mukomana uyu akaramba achindi nyengetedza hake achindi pfimba. Akaramba achikumbira mukana wekuti andiratidze chinonzi rudo.

Ndaka suduruka kubva munzvimbo iyoyi yaive yavene ndangariro dzakaipa kwandiri, ndichienda kunogara neShamwari. Ndakasvika pakuwana rimwe basa kunonzi KuLandela Safaris kuKariba.

Mukomana uyu akaramba achitevera achindi nyengetedza achindi tsvetsva apo neapo.

Dambudziko guru randakanonoka kuona rakazovepo nderekuti pese pataisangana pabonde, ndaisara ndave nenjovhera. Kuzonomuti tiringindi nenyaya yacho aibva atsika madziro kuti haazvizive. Ndaizonoona nhamo ndava ndega kurapwa chirwere chepabonde kuchipatara. Zvakaitika kakawanda, kusvika iye azoti sezvo zvaakuita sekuti arikukonzera ndiye dambudziko. Zvaive nani kuti tichigara tese, sezvo ndaiita sendinomu nenera mhosva isiri yake nguva dzese. Mari akati aive nayo saka chikoneso paive pasina. Ndakafara mumwoyo mangu, sezvo ndakangewo ndabvazera ndave nemakore makumi maviri nematatu(23). Zvakabva zvati gedye netsanangudzo iyaa yegore riyaa ndiri paSowe, yaiti ndicha roorwa nekuzo vaka musha wangu.

Takazo tanga kuronga zvekuzono wonekera kune veukama nekuzo bvisirwa kwangu roora. Zvese taiita mukuwirirana tichi unganidza zvinodiwa nemari yekuzono bvisa kumusha kwevabereki vangu. Zvisineyi iye Mukomana wangu akashaiswa mukana nebasa kuti azokunda kuenda kunobvisa roora. Inini ndakazoenda mbune kuvabereki, ndikanova zivisa kuti kune munhu achazouya kuzobvunzira nekukumbira sadza kwavari.

Kana museve woda nyama unongodauka paUta wega. Pakudzoka kubva kumusha ndarurama kunanga kubasa ndakashaya zvekufambisa ndikaerekana ndamanikidzira kuenda nekuKariba. Ndiye mahwekwe neMukomana wangu ndokubva anditi, chirega kuenda kubasa nechikepe, ndichaenda newe nemotokari. Ndakabvumirana naye, sezvo ndaiziva kuti aipota achimbo tyaira motokari. Takazo swera tichisasana hedu.

Rega nditi zita remukomana uyu rinonzi Emmanuel.

Sezvandareva takaswera tichiyemedzana hedu, zvinongoitawo vanodanana. Ndaka endeswa kumakuwerere paneimwe nzvimbo, tichifara muswere wese wezuva.

Rakanga rave gore ra2003. Zvinaani waani Amai Nhya kuti mukusasana muya ndimo mukurongerwa tsoro yekutiziswa. Emmanuel akange ato rongwa kare kuti agozonondi suma kuhama neshamwari dzake ndisina chandaifungira. Ndakatozo shamisikawo ndavekunzwa ave kutsanangurira veropa rekwake urongwa hwake hwekundi tizisa mukumbo. Akapa chikonzero chekuti haachakwanisa kugara ega, sezvo akange ava chigondora. Hapana kwandakazoenda kukabva kwava ndiko kuroorwa kwangu.

Pazvakazowira munzeve dzevabereki vangu, hazvina kuvaitira zvakanaka. Vakadya magaka mambishi neminzwa, vachiti ndaifanira kudzoka kubva kumurume. Vaida kuti ndigozoenderera mberi nechikoro sezvo vaiti nzvimbo yaive yatowanikwa pachikoro chiri kumusha.

Iniwo ndakazo dzamisa pfungwa ndikaona kuti zvaisazo buda, kuti ndambogara chifo chemwedzi miviri nemurume tichi chaya mapoto, wanike ndaakubvapo ndowanikwa ndosimira hanzu dzemwana wechikoro. Nezera randaiva ndave naro, ndini ndakachizo tsika madziro kurambira pamurume. Vabereki vangu ndakazongoita vekutumira shoko rekuti handichauyako kudondo kuno ndanakirwa. Zvakare ndaitirawo kuti zvimwe ndaive ndato tsika mwedzi. Kahupenyu kekuroorwa kanodiwa nemunhukadzi wese. Ndakazongo zvishingisa ndikati chaiyua chaizoonana neni. Dai ndakaziva, haitungamire.

Takagarisana hedu nemurume wangu zvakanaka pakutanga. Ndaive munhukadzi ane shungu kwazvo dzekuvaka musha nekuzadzawo imba nevana vane mutupo mumwe chete. Ndaisatombo tarisira kukundikana muwanano. Ndai दौरا kuti, chinonzi munhukadzi hunge uri muwanano, wovaka musha wako. Ndaiona sekuti ndizvo zvega zvaipa munhukadzi chiremerera munharaunda. Ndakazobata pamuviri pekutanga, panova pakandipa dangwe remwanasikana anove akatosvitsa makore gumi nemanomwe mugore ratiri nhasi ra 2022.

Chakachenjedza ndechakatanga. Ndakazotanga kunyatsochiona ndega unhu hwakaminama pamurume wandaiti wangu. Baba vaidar marokwe havo ivava, ndaka kanda mapfumo pasi nekuda kwe kahunhu kaEmmanuel.

Siku nesikati taingo garonetsana pamwe kwaiyua vanhukadzi; vakobvu, vatete, varefu zvese nevapfupi kuzogogodza pamba pedu vachitoda nekuratidza kuti dzaive shamwarikadzi dzemurume wangu. Ana Marweyi vacho vamwe vaitouya zvekuda kundi shungurudza kana kurwisa.

Hazvina kushamisa pandakati ndichibata nhumbu, zvese nenjovhera pamwechete.

Nhumbu yekutanga iyoyi yakandionesa chitsvuku chinenge ropa. Ndaiti uku ndiri kubaiwa majekiseni ekurapa njovhera, uchirwadziwa nayo, uku uriku svotwa uku urikuda kurutsa. Munongozivawo nhumbu dzekutanga hapana zvaunenge uchinyatso nzwisisa. Ndairapwa kasingaperi ndakazvitakura kudaro. Zvichida Emmanuel ainombora njovhera kune mumwe munhukadzi inini ndisati ndatombo pedza kurapwa imwe handizive.

Chandinongo yeuka ndechekuti ndakaona moto, chisionekeki nemubereki, njodo njodo, nyatwa chaiyo. Ndaka shungurudzika zvisina ani akamboona. Pandaka roorwa ndaive chibhora, chivhindikiti chemusikana. Asi nezvandakazo sangana nazvo muwanano hayewa yewa. Ndaka wonda ndikasara ndaita serutsanga rwemurwizi. Ndichiroorwa ndaive nehuremu hunopfuura makumi masere ema kirogiramu(80 Kgs). Asi nekuzo shungurudzwa ne zvipingamupinyi zvandambo reva ndaka svava ndikadzikira uremu kusvika pa makumi mana ane nhanhatu (46kg), mugore rekutanga iroro.

Ndakagara ndika shingirira, kusvika nhumbu yaane mwedzi misere. Tiri mushishi yekugadzirira kuti ndigono sungirwa, setsika dzedu kuti munhukadzi ano sunungukira kumba kwevabereki vake. Kunyanya nyanya takatarisana nenhumbu yekutanga. Taive tichiri mushishi rekuunganidza zvinodiwa. Asi sekuziva kwenyu, vanhukadzi vechidiki vanenge vasinganyatso ziva kuverenga mazuva enhumbu, zvakare kushayawo zvikwanisiro zvekuno vhenekwa kuti zuva rekupona mwana rinyatso zivikanwa. Ndakabva ndasununguka mwanasikana wangu ndisati ndatimbodii kana neku sungurwa kwese. Waive uri musi wa 3 Kukadzi 2004.

Kuuya kweDangwe rangu kwakandipa mufaro wakanyanyisa. Ndakatenda Mwari ndamubata mwana mumawoko. Sezvo ndakanga ndavhenekwa ropa rikawanikwa risina utachiwana panguva iyoyo. ndakazvara mwana asina chipomerwa, uye ari chivhindikiti raive dzikana hombe. Tikafara tika pembera.

Ndakadzoka muviri kuita kunge kamwana kadiki nekuda kwekurwara nenjovhera ndiine pamuviri.

Zvakadaro ndakazoona ndiripamurume. Ana Ambuya vaEmmanuel vaive nerudo, vakandi dziidzisa kuti rusvava rwunobatwa sei, kumugezesa kwacho zvese nemayamwisiro, hayewa ndakapinzwa chikoro

chemahara kusvika ndave amai vakakwana, pakuchengeta rusvava. Asi Mwana asvitsa mazuva gumi bedzi ndakaita rinenge mota pazamu. Ndakafunga kuti kudzvooverwa nemwana ari pamunyatso.

Ndakaenda kuchipatara vakatsinhira kuti raiva mota, asi hondo yacho yakazonyatso chitanga manje. Ndakabaiwa majekiseni ndikapihwa mishonga yekuparadzira mota asi hazvina kuita sekudaro. Ndaka shungurudzwa nemota irori zvekuti ndakatozo pedzisira ndapihwa mubhedha muChipatara naye muचेचे wangu iyeye. Ndakamugara ndichi ongororwa neku vhenekwa kuti mota raive remhando ipi. Vaiyedza ana Chiremba kundipa mishonga inoita kuti ripararire asi vzairamba. Mwana akadzamara kusvitsa masvondo matanhatu ekuzvarwa tirimo tese muchipatara. VanaChiremba vakayedza kunzwisisa dambudziko raive pazamu vakazvishayawo kuti imota rudzii. Mwanasikana wangu akange ave kuraramiswa nekuyamwa zamu rimwe chete bedzi.

Vakagumisidza vaakuti zvirinani kutoita zveku kotsirisa munhu vondivhiya. Hama dzangu, ipapo upenyu hwaive hwandiomera kuti ndika vhiyiwa zvaigona kuyenda nepamwe ndikatadza kufefemuka. Ko karusvava kangu kaizosara naani?

Ndakabva ndatsika madziro ndikati bodo ndinoty, zvekuvhiyiwa kwete, tozoyambuka zambuko racho tasvika parwizi.

Ndakabva ndanzi chibuda hako muchipatara. Ndichisvika kumba ndakabva ndasviko taura nevanhu vakuru vemumusha mandakaroowa. Vakazoisa misoro pamwe chete vakati, sezvo Makoti asina kuzenge asungirwa zvaive nani kuti zviitwe sezvo marishoma nezvinhu zvevasungiro zvaivepo.

Ndakazo simuka nerusvava rwangu ndakananga kumusha kwandaka berekwa. Sezvineiwo ndichingo mhara pamusha pedu, pasina mazuva akawanda, zamu rekundi shungurudza rakatanga kudzokedzana panzvimbo. Chakava chishamiso pandakatanga kuyamwisa zvekare nezamu irori rekumbenge ravhara rikapotsa randiurayira muchipatara.

Ndakatozo yamwisa hangu kusvika mwedzi wechi pfumbamwe, ndokubva mwana wangu atanga kudzidzira kufamba ndokuto pedzesera omhanya nechivanze. Chakave chimwe chishamiso kwandiri zve, kukasika kufamba kwakaita mwana. Sedangwe, ndaiti achaita dera nekuyema.

Ndakafara ndikapembera, chimwana changu chaiyevedza chaidadisa. Ndakazogara gara zvimasvondo zvakati kuti ndokuzo dzokera hangu kumurume.

Imba yangu yaida kushinga uye ndaishivirira nekuda kwekuti murume wangu ndaimuda akadaro. Chainyanyo rwadza mumba mangu ndechekuti, Emmanuel aisada kundipa mari kana tsee zvayo. Ndairarama upenyu hwekuti mari ndaitoita yekuba muhomwe dzemidhebe yake kana achinge auya kumba akararadza nedoro. Pamusoro peizvozvo ndaizvindikitwa, kurohwa kuitwa senyoka yapinda mumba. Iwo mashoko ekunyomba ndaigaro kandirwa ari makobvu nematete.

Mashoko edzidziso yekuti munhukadzi anofanira kushinga kuti musha umire, airamba achindipa hushingi. Rudo nemurume wango ndirwo rwainyanyove hwaro hwekushinga kwangu. Ndakaramba ndichiita tumabhindauko twangu tweekutengesa tengesa, kamari kashoma kandaiwana ndaibva ndacherera mukagaba kangu.

Ndaisungirira mari iyoyi ndiine chinangwa chekuve mudzimai akarongeka, mudzimai anoshava shavawo asinga mirire bedzi kugashidzwa nemurume.

Ndaipota ndichitenga midziyo yemumba mangu, ndichiti zvichida Mwamuna wangu achaonawo shungu dzangu dzekuvaka musha. Nyangwe zvazvo imba yacho yaivava nekuswinya sechi dzinde chemu hohozhwa chine unye chiya chaitivava tichifudza mombe.

Ndaitotiwo ndika tenga midziyo nekuratidzawo kuti ndinogona zviraramira nekubatsiridza murume. Asi zvakashaya basa. Unhu hwemurume wangu hauna kuchinja. Ndakaramba ndakadzvinirirwa nekutsikirirwa zvese nekudzikisirwa ndirimo muwanano iyoyi. Nguva haimire hayo kufamba, mazuva aipindana akave masvondo, masvondo akave mwedzi, mwedzi ikave makore. Kubva gore ra 2004 kusvika tatove muna 2006.

Asi, pandakabva kumusha payaa mwana achine mwedzi mipfumbamwe ndakasvikobata pamuviri pechipiri, ndokubva papfukudzika pachiiine mwedzi mitatu bedzi. Ndakazoenda kunogezwa chibereko kuchipatara. Kuita sezvine chinodaro ndakabva ndangoita pamwe pamuviri zvekare pechitatu ndokubva pabva zvekare. Chiremba akabva ati ahh amai imi chimbomirai kubata pamuviri muzododzewo chibereko chimbogadzikana uye kupora kubva pakupfukudzika. Ndakabva ndakurudzirwa kutsvaga nzira yeku ronga nayo mhuri. Ndokutanga kumwa mapiritisi anodzivirira kubata pamuviri. Ndakatevedzera chirongwa ichi kusvika mwanasikana wekutanga ave nemakore maviri. Ndakanga ndave kutonzwawo kuda mwana. Ndakabva ndakomborerwa nekubata pamuviri pechina.

Ndabata pamuviri kudaro, mazuva iwaya murume wangu aive achi fambidzana neimwewo pfambi yemunharaunda. Mukadzi uyu aitoita zvemakwikwi chaizvo neni sezvo waitodanana manyembe pachena pasina kana zveku hwandirana. Zvaidibaya mumwoyo asi chekuita paive pasina. Ndaingo shingirira ndichitarisa mwana wedu aive mudiki. Ndakatsidza kushingirira kusvika ndamboriritirawo mwana wangu ati samhukei.

Zvishoma nezvishoma ndakange ndaakuzviona kuti ummm kunenge kwaive kugarira mwana bedzi pasina rudo. Pamuviri pakatanga kukura zvakanaka. KuKereke ndaienda semazuva ose uye ndaitevedza tsanangudzo dzaibva kune vaFemberi veku masowe nemonemo. Hapano zvino, pamuviri pangu pasvika kumwedzi minomwe. Mukadzi uyaa aifambidzana nemurume wangu, zita rake anonzi Patuma, akabva asvika. Patuma aive mvana inevana vaviri. Aive akatiza murume mushure meku shungurudzwa zvakananyanya.

Makore iwaya chirwere cheshuramatongo (HIV/AIDS) yaive isiri nyore, kutaura nezvacho. Kare kare ikako, zvaitowoneka munhu achifamba kuti uyu anenge aneutachiwana kana kuti arikurwara ne AIDS. Zvakadaro, mumwe wevana vemukadzi iyeyu wechipiri aive neutano usina kunyatsoti tsvikiti. Mwana iyeyu ayisa kura zvinotarisirwa pavana vadiki, kuti vati kwaku. Akatenge ave chirevo chemumusha, kuti haasikukura uye indonda. Vanhu vemunharaunda vaingo fambisa runyerekupe rwekuti mwana uyu anechirwere. Zvekuti dai mazuva iwayo ndakanga ndakawana ruzivo rwe Shuramatongo rwuzere, ndingadai ndakasiya imba nekuchimbizika. Iri nzira yekutiza neupenyu hwangu. Asi sezvinei ndakango garawo ndichikwikwidzana naye Patuma.

Akasvika akanditi: "Amayi ndauyawo kuti tionesane. Emmanuel angave arimurume wenyu hongu, asi inini naye hatife takasiyana."

Akaenderera mberi nemashoko achiti:

"Mabata zvenyu pamuviri asi zivai kuti munogona kufa napo, kana kuti iyo mhodzi iri mamuri ndiyo ichafa".

Munongo zivawo kuti vakuru vaititi Muromo hauzarirwe nerwizi, saka inini ndakato tora mashoko ake sedambe. Ndikatoti ahh ndizvozvinoitika pabarika. Ko rakange ratove barika kaa.

Sezvinei ndakazongoti rega ndinoreurura chiitiko ichi kuMasowe. Vanhu vemweya vakabva vatondi vhundutsa pavakatsigira vachiti mukadzi uyu aisa reveteka nhando, asi kutoti ndizvo zvaivepo pachokwadi. Ndakazopihwa kundiso pasowe ndikanzi, ndisuduruke nzvimbo yandaigara sezvo paive pedyo pedyo na Patuma. Ndakabva ndachimbizika kuita zvaive zvarehwa, ndoku tama. Ndakatuta mitundu yangu ndokuenda kumba kwaBabamukuru mukoma waBaba.

Mukuwasha Emmanuel akanga ogara pamba paTezvara. Kumasowe takanga taudzwa kuti sudurukai pamugere kuitira kuti mhupo yerufu ipfuure. Vakavimbisa kuti chikamu chacho chaizodarika kana ndabata mwana mumawoko. Uye vaizo simbisisa paminamoto kudzivirira kudeuka kwero, reMurandakadzi kana Chipotera. Chipotera zvinongoreva mwana mudiki pamutauro wekuMasowe. Mashoko aPatuma akange zvino ave kundityisa. Mukazitarisa handisini nyakutsvagana naanaPatuma. Asi ndini ndaive ndatarisana

nenjodzi inouya nemumhepo usingazive kwairi kubva. Chandaive ndakanganisira Patuma hapana aiziva. Iye ndiye akanga atounzwa naEmmanuel muhupenyu hwedu.

Takazo gara hedu zvakanaka kusvika ndasununguka mwana mukomana. Hazvina kungoitika mutserendende nekuda kwekuti mwana aive akachinjika zvinove zvaimu tadzisa kubuda nyore.

Taka ramba takamira pakunamata Mwari akazondi nzwira ngoni mwana akapinduka akazo zvarwa hake zvakanaka.

Takapemberera Mwanakomana akazo tumidzwa kuti Emmanuel Audious Junior.

Ndakangoita zvizuva ndabva kusununguka ndokutanga kurwara rwara kusina tsarukano. Urwere hwacho hwaiza nzwisisika zvekuti ndakamhanyira kuMasowe kuvaFemberi vepamweya. Kana kunaana Godobori ndakapedzera ndaenda kuri kutsvaga kurarama, hapana pandakasiya. Kuchipatara ndiko kwandakazo svikobatwa kuti ndaive neutachiwana hwe HIV /AIDS.

Huwandu hwe(CD4 count)yangu hwaive hwakakwira, naizvozvo mazuva iwayo waimbomiswa kuenda pachirongwa chekumwa mapiritsi(ART).

Hongu kuroiwa kwaiveko chivanhu chiriko, asi chakanetsa pamwanakomana wangu uyu ndechekuti aive asina kuvhenekwa kana kudzivirirwa kutapukirwa ne utachiwana achibva mudumbu maAmai vake.

Ndakango shingirira kurera mwana ndichirwara kudaro. Ndofunga ndakatozonzwa zvirinani mwana atove nemwedzi mitanhatu. Ndakambo pindana nacho zvaitoda kushinga.

Murombo haarove chinenguwo, mukunzwa zvirinani makazvarawo rimwe dambudziko.

Ndichitoti ndava kufurwawo nemhepo ndanaya. Murume wangu akabva ateverwawo nemweya isingade kubudirira, akaita misikanzwa kubasa ndokubva asungwa. Nyaya yacho yakanetsa ndikasvika pakutengesa midziyo yemumba kuti ndikwanise kubhadharira murume wangu mari yekudare, yeBhero kuti atongwe achibva kumba asavharirwe muChitokisi. Musi wasunungurwa murume wangu ndiwo musu warwarisa mwanakomana wangu.

Akazopedzera atoenda kuChipatara cheKariba tikapihwa mudhedha kuti arapwe. Takagara muchipatara. Audious aiti; kuzvimba makumbo, mawoko zvese nemaziso. Ana chiremba vaimira mira kwazvo kuti hutano hwemwana hudzokedzane. Vaiedza kuongorora kuti chii chaikonzera hundonda hwemwana, vakatombo fungidzira kuti pamwe aive aine Kwashi (chirwere chinokonzerwa nekushaikwa kwechikafu chinovakamuviri). Izvi zvakanishamisa sezvo ndaimuyamwisa mwedzi mitanhatu yese pasina kana dambudziko. Ndikabva ndamurumura ipapo pamwedzi mitanhatu sezvo ndakanga ndabatwa utachiwana. Mwana akarwara zvakaomarara achichengetwa aripo pachipatara.

Akazotanga kuita tsvina nhemanhema yakati tsvaa. Zvakandi shamisa ndikandoudza ana Mbuya pachipatara nekuti tsvina yakadai ndaive ndisati ndamboina mukurarama, nyangwe zvazvo ndaive ndichiri munhukadzi wechidiki. Vana Ambuya vakandi simbisa kuti ndizvo zvinoita vacheche vese kana varwaisa. Ndakanga ndisiri kuziva kuti mwanakomana wangu akange ave munzira yekuenda kwamupfiganebwe. Kwakapera mazuva matatu achiita tsvina iyoyo yakasviba kuti ndoo, nhema nhema kunge matsito. Izvo kwaani? Tsinga dzemwana dzaitovharika zvisvishoma nezvishoma, amai nhiya imi zvazo zivikanwa naani kuti ndizvo zviripo. Kwakava ndiko kuwonekedzana nemwana wangu akabva afuga rake ega. Zvakandidzimba mumwoyo kuti akange ave mwana wechina wandainguno rasa. Ndakanga ndangosara nezai rimwe reGondo.

Ndakadzoka kumba kuzoona nezve kuradzikwa kwemwanakomana, tikabata basa racho asi ndaive nezironda mukati memwoyo wangu. Ndakagara mazuva ndiine zibundu pahuro, dziri shungu. Chikamu chacho chakapfuura, hacho asi Shuramatongo yakanga yachindi gwadamisa. Pazera rangu, nezvandaishuvira mukuvaka musha ndakanga ndazo bhabhatidzwa kuti ndipindewo mukuve mushungurudzwi nekuda kwechirwere ichochi.

Ukuwo Baba vema zvavakanga vabva muhusungwa vakanga vasisaende kubasa. Rimwe remazuva ndiri kuMasowe ndakanongedzerwa pajekerere ndikanzi ndisimuke. Ndakavhenekwa paMweya ndiri murenje imomo. Ndakapomerwa mhaka yekuti ndini ndaive ndakasunga makomborero ebasa remawoko kumurume wangu nekuda kwe zvigumbu zvinova zvaivhara kushava kwake.

Ndichiri pasowe ipapo ndaka kurudzirwa kusunungura zvigumbu kumurume wangu. Zvakanzi kusungikana kwandaive nako mumwoyo ndiko kwaitoshaisa murume wangu mabasa emaoko kuti ariritire mhuri. Mufemberi akati kwandiri munhu kana uri mutendi haudaro, unofanira kuregerera nemwoyo wese, wokanganwira munhu. Mukatarisawo rimwe divi rechinamoto, chinotsikirira Madzimai muwanano, tsvee kuti vapange mazano kuhoromori anove Emmanuel inini ndini ndaitarisirwa kuti ndiregerere murume wangu. Ko iyewo hunhu hwake vakadii kumugadza dare? Unobva watoona wega kuti tsika dzedu nemagariro zvinodzvanyirira vanhukadzi, zvakare mumaKereke tsika idzodzo dzakagashirwa ndoku vhanganiswa neshoko raMwari zvobva zvadzvanya zvakare divi remadzimai ari muwanano. Zvisinei hanzu mudzimu wakupa chironda wati nhunzi dzikudye.

Ndakaita sekudaro, ndikatoonawo zvechokwadi murume paakasimuka akaenda Harare kunotsvaga basa, akabva asvikowana basa chiriporipotyo. Murume awana rimwe basa, ndakatoti ahehwa Mwari maita basa. Handina kuziva zvaive mber. Vakuru vanoti totenda maruva tadya chakata. Murume paakango fefeterwa nemhepo ye guta guru remuZimbabwe, kana ndangariro dzake dzakabva dzapeperetswawo nemhepo yacho. Ndokubva akanganwa kuti ndakasiya mhuri kuKariba. Yangu nhamo ndeye chikwepa chefodya kuti uku chakarumwa, ukuchirikutsva. Murume akaita kwakaenda imbwa ndiko kwakaenda tsuro.

Ndakasara zvino ndikaona nhamo, ukuwo muridzi wemba yepatairoja aiswera akandi vhurira ziso achida mari yemuripo wemba yataigara. Mwanasikana wedu aive chindumurwa chinodawo kudya nezvimwewo. Iniwo semutenda weHIV ndaifanira kudya zvinovaka muviri kuitira CD4 yangu yaisungirwa kugara yakakwira. Kukwira kwayo kwaibva mukudya zvakakwana uye kugadzikana mupfungwa nendangariro. Ndakanga ndakatarisana nenyatwa chaiyo. Ndakatoona kuti ndikada kurara nezamu mukwana hazvibude. Pakange papisade mukadzi ano garira mawoko. Ndakabva ndaronga kuita musika.

Ndakatangana kutengesa twakasiyana siyana kuti mhuri yandaive nayo irarame. Ndaive ndaakungo zivikanwa semukadzi wemwana mumwe. Ndaibakana mumwoyo nevana vangu vana vandakatadza kutumawo, sezvinoita dzimwe mhuri. Ndaimbodzamisira pfungwa kuti ko sei ndakasarudzwa kuita ichochi chirwere cheniyika vamwe vezera rangu vasina? Ko iyo shuramatongo yacho haizvizi here kuti uyu musikana aive asina kana misikanzwa yekuita zvepabonde nevakomana achikura?. Ko mhosva yangu ndeyeyi? Inga mumba mangu ndakavimbika wani handina mumwe murume wandakaziva kubva ndichi roorwa. Chikonzero nei vanhurume vasingatyi HIV? Ko sei wangu Murume achizvitora sezvinhu zvenhando? Ko sei achiramba kunotorwa ropa ovhenekwa? Asi HIV chirwere chemarudzi? Mhinduro kwekudziwana ndiko kwainetsa.

Zvinotoda kushinga zvamunoona hupenyu hwemunhukadzi hausi nyore.

Paunokura unenge uchingoudzwa kuti kuroorwa ndiko kuti wave mukadzi akazara, anoremekedzwa, anechimiro pamberi pechita chevanhu.

Mari yaitarisirwawo kubva kumurume aive kuGuta guru renyika haina kana musi wayakauya. Murume wangu aive akato furatidzwa mwoyo, kubva akanganwa zai regondo rakewo. Kana aikanganwa hake inini zvaisave nemhosva, ko zvino wake weropa aiti arikudyei? Ari kugara pai? Achipfekei? Dzaingove ndangariro uchifunganya asi chaizobuda pakuzvidya mwoyo hapana. Paitodiwa chino batika.

Bhindauko rangu rikatanga kukura zvisvishoma nezvisvishoma. Ndikatanga kuripa zvikwereti zvinoti: Mvura, Magetsi, uye imba yataigara. Ndakatangawo kufurwa nekamhepo, nekufamba kwebhizimusi rangu.

Mwedzi yaitopindana mwana achikura. Asi mudiwa wangu ndaingo mufunga, chishuwo chacho chaikura zuva nezuva. Mwoyo wangu wakanga wodokwairira kumutevera Harare ikoko.

Mwedzi mitanhatu yakapfuura ndichigara ndega nemwana wangu. Ndipo pandakazo shinga kutevera kwaave akaenda. Harare yakati gamuchira tikasanganiswa semhuri, asi munhu wangu aive asina kushandura unhu hwake hwakaipa. Mari angondinyima, kurova aingondirova, kutuka achingondituka siku nesikati. Izvi zvandareva zvino shungurudza asi hazvisvike panyaya huru yekusagutsikana nemukadzi wako wemumba. Murume akaramba achiita gumbo mumba gumbo panze, ndikatoona sekuti aito tesvedzera unyanzvi hwekuuta zve chihure. Akanga atove remakoko chairo.

Takaramba tichi shungurudzana muwanano, kunyanya nyanya inini kurutivi rwangu ndini ndaive nhapwa chaiyo. Hwakanga hwatove upenyu hwangu hwaka sanangurwa, asi huchirwadza.

Gore ra2009 rakauya rikadarika tikabata 2010 akapera zvakare. Sezvineyi inini ndini ndakange ndave kushanda iye basa rakanga rapera asisa shande. Ndakabata pamuviri pechishanu paka pfukudzika zvekare pasvika mwedzi mitatu. Ndakaoma mate mukanwa nazvo. Ndakazobata imwe nhumbu zvakare yaive nemwana mukomana.

Nguva yangu yekufara hama wee yaive shoma.

Ndaitaurirwa magaramwoyo ndichinyombwa; ndainzi haugone kupfekawo sevamwe vanhukadzi, haugeze mvura ichi daviranawo neganda rako. Pamusoro pemashoko ndaibva ndatsondokotwa kurohwa zvekare. Kwamunoti kushungurudzwa ndokuziva asi kwangu kwaive kumberi.

Semunhu wekukurira muchinamoto chakashoreka chekuMasowe ndaizvi tarisirawo pasi, nekuda kwemarererwo. Ndakatanga kufunga kuti zvichidawo mupfekero wedu wekuve nemigubvururu yemarokwe anenge achatsvaira pasi ndiwo waindiita ndinzi haugone kupfeka.

Harare iguta rine zvakasiyana siyana zvinoyevedza kusanganisira vanhukadzi. Zvakandipa pfungwa dzekuti zvirinani ndito tevedzerawo zvandirikuona muGuta guru reZimbabwe. "Rudo imoto runoto kuchidzirwa, vana Amai", rwiyo rwakaimbwa neMushakabvu Marshal Munhumumwe.

Kuvandudza chimiro ndakabva ndazvikoshesa, ndokutangawo kutenga zvipfeko zvemunyika zvakadai semidhebhe nezvikabudura zvevanhukadzi, marokwe mapfupi asingasvike pamabvi, naiyo mbambamba yakarehwa. Mbambamba inoita kuti uite semunhu akapombwa muviri nejira. Haisi nyore unenge uine kakunyara asi kana watofunga zvekufadza mutengi wedoro wotoshinga. Sekuimba kunoita vechidiki vemazuvano. Mutengi wedoro apa aive murume wangu. Mbatya dzisina mawoko ndakatanga kudzitsvagawo ndichipfeka. Hapana chandisina kuedza kusanganisira kuzvi nyora kumeso nekuzora dota rekumeso rakatsvukuruka riya.

Ndaka shungurudzika muwanano zvekusvika pakudzidzira kumwawo doro. Ndaiti zvimwe ndikambo raradza sezvandaionawo iye murume wangu achiita zvimwe nhamo dzangu dzaitapudzika.

Zvese izvi zvakazoitika mugore randabata pamuviri pemwanakomana wangu, makanga mava muna 2011. Ndakanga ndave kugadzirwawo musoro kuri kuda kufadza Murume bedzi.

Zvekuve madzimai vekumasowe ndakambozvisendeka nekuti ndaitozvipa mhosva yekuti zvimwe nekusa shambidzika semudzimai wanhasi ndizvo zvaituma murume wangu kuti abude achinotsvaga vamwe vakadzi. Sekushinga kwemasoja echikadzi akarwa hondo yerusununguko ndakanga ndave nechinangwa chekudzora Murume wangu kuti asapoye kunotsvaga anaMarwei kunze kwemusha.

Ndakasvika pakusununguka mwanakomana wangu murume asati ave kushanda. Ndasununguka mwana wangu, ndakamupa zita rekuti Tawanyasha. Ndaitevedzera zvese zvairehwa navana Chiremba kudzivirira

mwana wangu ari mudumbu. Pachirongwa chekumwa mapiritsi ekudzivirira kuwanda kwe utachiwana hwe Shuramatongo, ndakanga ndichigere kunyoreswa nekuti CD4 count yangu yaive ichakakwira zvichireva kuti utachiwana hwaive hurimo, asi huri pasi pehuwandu hunotyirwa kuti hungakuvadze nhengo dzemumuviri kana kuti kundirwarisa. Ndizvo zvaitwa makore apfuura. Ndakapihwa mishonga yese yekudzivirira mwana, zvakare ndaivhenekwa chibereko pese pandaienda kunopimwa venhumbu kuSkero. Ndazo sununguka mwana ndakanzi mwana wodii naye? Mayererano nekuyamwisa. Ndakatsika madziro kuramba kuyamwisa nekuti ndakanga ndotyira kuti zvimwe mwanakomana wangu wekuzoshaya nechirwere cheShuramatongo ndini ndakamutapurira chirwere pakuyamwa. Mukaka wemugaba ndakanga ndatenga wakati wandei. Ana Chiremba vakambozama kundinyeurira nekundipanga mazano akanangana nezve chirwere kutapukira kwacho uye zvakanakira kuyamwisa mwana asi ndakazvirasa zvese kumararo.

Ndakatora mwana ndokuenda kumba ndokugadzirira mwana mukaka wemubhoro. Mwana akangorara usiku umwechete, pazuva repiri ndokufuma achi dapa kurutsa. Akarutsa kusvika avekuita mabayo, ndakamhanya naye kuchipatara, kuSally Mugabe Hospital. Tawananyasha akange zvino angoti rapata akasvikoiswa panobatsirwa varwere kufema mweya weOxygen. Ndokuzo bengenuka pave paya. Mwana ndakagara naye muchipatara. Mukugara imomo ndimo mukuzo taurirwa nevakuru vemo anaMetironi navanaMukoti vamwe waitibatsira. Takagara pasi vakandionesa nekundidzidzisa kuti: makare kare chirwere chichatanga mushonga pakanga pasina, asi parizvino mushonga wekumwa sema piritsi achidzivirira kutapukira kwechirwere kubva kumubereki kuenda paMwana waveko. Ndakapinzwa chikoro ndikabva ndapenyera ndokutendeuka kubva mumuono wakasara wekusada kuyamwisa mwana. Ndakaudzwa kuti ndaifanira kuyamwisa mwana mukaka wangu wemuzamu bedzi kusvika mwedzi mitanhatu yapera kuti fuu. Ndakazopihwa Cotrimoxazol unova mushonga wekupa mwana kumudzivirira zvirwere. Asi hwakava upenyu hwemwana hwekungove nekahundonda kana kuti kurwara rwara, zvaitidzosa kuchipatara nguva ne nguva.

Masvondo matanhatu akwana, Tawananyasha akavhenekwa ropa rake ndokuwanikwa asina utachiwana hweHIV. Ndakafara ndikanzwa kugadzikana mukati mehana.

Ndakaenderera mberi naro zamu pamwana kusvika mwedzi mitanhatu yakwana. Akavhenekwa ropa zvekare akabuda shudhu. Aive akachena asina HIV. Ndakafara ndikapururudza, ndikadzana. Ndakakomekedzwa neku kurudzirwa kuramba ndichi tevedzera urongwa hwekupa mwana mushonga dzamara ndazomurumura pagore nechidimbu. Ndaka kurudzirwa zvekare kuchitanga kumupa chikafu. Tichizosvika pagore nemwedzi mitanhatu mwanakomana aka vhenekwa ropa ndokuyambuka hake asina chirwere. Ndakava nemufaro mukuru, kuti ndaive ndakunda kuzvara mwana asina utachiwana ini ndiinahwo. Ndaka dzokera kumba ndokurumura mwana zvakaisvonaka ndokuenderera mberi nekumupa chikafu chinovaka muviri.

Chikamu ichi chichangobva mukudarika, Gosha vakabva varwara. Chamangwiza zvakabva zvavabata nesimba.

Emmanuel aisatomboda hake kunzwa nezvekuvhenekwa ropa kana kuzeza kuti kunze kunei. Aikakisa nharo achizvitora sezvisina maturo. Wainzwa achiti;

"Iwewe ndiwe wabatwa chirwere kwete ini zvakare hapana parikundi dzimba saka zvekuongororwa ropa ndezve nhando, ndiri ndaka gwinya ini."

Aigaro daro murume wangu achizvirova dundundu. Mukudaro aibva aramba kushandura maitiro ake akaipa ekusavimbika pabonde.

Kana kuita bonde rakadzivirirwa aizviramba.

Hapano zvino achizosangana nedenda rakamugwadamisa. Murume wangu aipindwa nechando, zvakare aibuda mapundu muviri wese. Mukubuda mapundu uku akazongoerekana adonha nerimwe zuva. Musi waakadonha ndaive ndaperekedza vaTete hanzvadzi yaBaba avo vaive vaitawo misikanzwa yekumborega

kumwa mapiritsi (ARV). Pandakava perekedza kuChipatara kuno gadzirisa mapepa avo kudaro, ndipo pakasvika shoko rekudonha kwaEmmanuel.

Ndakaita chipatapata kupinda munzira ndokuno torana newangu murume kuenda naye kuChipatara cheNazareta. Akano vhenekwa ndokuzotorwa CD4 ikawanikwa iri panomwe (7) bedzi. Yanguwo CD4 yakazowanikwa yadzikirawo kusvika paMazana-maviri-anema kumi-mana-ane-ina(244). Takabva tapihwa dzidziso pamwe chete inopihwa wese abatwa neUtachiwana. Takaita chifo chemazuva matatu tichinguno dzidziswa zvizere maererano nekurarama uine utachiwana. Tese takabva taiswa pachirongwa chekumwa mapiritsi cheART.

Inini ndaizvifambira ndakagwinya asi murume wangu zvakazokwidza, akarwara zvakaomarara nekuipisisa. Nekuda kwekuti iye akabva abatwa ne chirwere cherurindi chinonzi nechirungu Celebral TB. Tichiri kushushikana neTB yake akabva abatwa zvakare nechirwere chinounzwa neUmhutu cheMarariya.

Nhamo haibve paneimwe. Hapano pakurapwa paidiwa mari yokuti baba vevana varapirwe muchipatara vapihwe mubhedha asi taive tisina.

Zvakaita kuti tisarudze kuti arapirwe kumba. Ndakatanga kupepa murume. Zvairwadza zvaive zvisiri nyore.

Aripanhovo yerufu kudaro, hama neshamwari dzaiuya kuzoona murwere. Dzimwe dzainyomba dzimwe dzichitukirira, dzimwe dzainongedza dzichishoropodza. Kutaura chokwadi ndaigara ndiine misodzi pamata. Rakanga rave gore ra2014 apo murume akanyanyisa kurwara. Vabereki vanguwo vakauya vakati haunga zvikanise zvese, kuti kupepa murume zvese neku rera vana. Vakabva vaona zvakakodzera kutora vana, kuti ndirerukirwe. Mwanakomana Tawananyasha aive achiine gore nechidimbu bedzi, paaka vhenekwa TB akaonekwa asina, akatorwa mvura ye pamusana kuti vatarise chirwere che menengitis akaonekwa asina. Asi vanaChiremba vakati mwana ngaaiswe pachirongwa chekurapwa sezvo aive ambogara pedyo nemunhu anechirwere cherurindi. Ichi chidanho chakatorwa kuitira kuti mwana achengetedzwe utano hwake asazobatwe TB.

Amai vangu vakabva vazatora vese Audry naTawananyasha vakaendwa navo kumusha ndikasara nehondo yangu yekupepa murume.

Ndairutsirwa ndai bvisa tsvina yake aizviitira paarere, ndaimu gezesa nekumupaka chikafu. Pfungwa dzake dzakambo vhiringika sezvo chirwere chakanga chapinda muurozvi. Zvaikonzera kuti anditukirire zvakaoma semunhu anenge atove murwere wepfungwa. Ndaitongo fanira kuzvijaira. Munhu unopedzesera waakuita sekuti une dehwe reMvuu risinganzwe marwadzo kuri kuzvishingisa bedzi. Semurume wandaida ndaito gomera ndiripo.

Ndakapepa murume kwemakore maviri akazara. Murume akabengenuka akanaya kuvewo munhu pakare. Zvandakaona zvadai ndakafara ndokuona kuti chikafu mumba chaidiwa zvakare vabereki kumusha vaidawo tumari tweeku batsiridza kurarama kwavowo. Ndakabva ndaita zano rekutsvaga basa kuHarare ikoko. Basa ndakariwana riri remumba rekuchengeta vamwe Mai vaive vaka oma mitezo (Stroke). Vakanga vaine vana vavo vakomana vairi, zvakare mai ava vaisagona kuzvibatsira kana kubata mabasa epamba. Ndaenda ndikanogara navo zvemasvondo maviri. Tichichengetana kudaro muku kurukura ndakazo bvunzisa kuti urwere hwavo hwaive hwambo nyatso tanga sei? Nekuti kwandiri zvaisarakidza zvakanaka kuti yaingove Stroke iri yega. Vakazondi tsanangurira kuti vaivewo vaunzirwa chirwere che Shuramatongo nemurume wavo. Saka vakanga vasina kuzvigashira zvakanaka, uye vaive varasa tariro yekurarama. Ndakazova tsanangurirawo rangu dambudziko, ndikava ratidza mapiritsi angu andaimwa. Ndakazovati mukanditarisa munobvuma here kuti ndiri pachirongwa? Vakashamisika nazvo nekuti ndaive chivhindikiti chakagwinya zvekuti hapana aimbofungira. Ndakazo vabvunza kuti ko kana murikuti makabatwa HIV ko wani handikuonei muchimwa mapiritsi, aripi amaimbomwa? Ndakabatikana pavakati havana munhu aikwanisa kunovatorera mishonga saka vasisamwe. Ndakazozvipira kuenda navo ku chipatara chaive padhuze. Vakaramba kuti nzwisisa nekutipira rubatsiro. Takasimudzira kunanga kuChimwe chipatara chisiri chehurumende, kunova ndiko kwatakazo wana rubatsiro. Vakazotinyorera

tsamba yekuenda nayo kuSally Mugabe Hospital, mazuva iwayo yaive ichiri kushevedzwa kuti Harare Hospital.

Takabva tanzi vaifanira kuvhenekwa ropa, CD4 zvese neTB kuti vazotangidza kubatsirwa. Mudzimai uyu aive asingagone kufamba, aiita zveku gwesha. Asi ukamutarisa aive mukadzi akanaka, anoyemurika kwazvo. Munhu bedzi akanga ashaya munhu anomu kurudzira kuti aite tariro svinu pakurarama.

Neruzivo, nenzira yandakanga ndafamba pakupepa murume wangu, zvakandiitira nyore kugadzirira Mudzimai uyu nzira yekupora kana kuvewo murwere arinani. Kunyanya gwinyiso yekuve netariro haa iyo ndakavasiya vatovewo munhu mutsva chaiye.

Kutsvaira mumba ndakasiya vave kugona, asi pandakasvika zuva rekutanga vaisato gona kana kusimudza mutsvairo kana kutsvaira. Mbatya vakange vaakuto zviwachirawo vega semunhukadzi aripamusha pake.

Tsitsi dzino tsitsirira. Vehukama hweMudzimai uyu, (zita rake ndaakurikanganwa) vakazvitora nepasipo. Vaiwona sekuti kukurudzira kwandaita amai ava kuti vasadharare kugwinyisa mitezo yavo, vaitonzi ndiri kuvaitira utsinye. Saka ndakazopesana nehama dzavo ndiko kuzosiyawo basa kwandakaita.

Ndinonzwisisa kuti vanhu kana vasina kusangana nenzira yekurarama yakaoma, vanogona kufunga kuti upenyu hunongo yerera serukova. Asi kana waka pindana nepaka manikidzika unotsvaga nzira dzekubuda kuseri nadzo zvokuitira nyore. Zvino vamwe vanobva vatogumirwa kushaiwa kana zano. Ndinongofara nekuziva kuti Mudzimai iyeyu ndakato muwedzera mazuva kana masvondo potse potse ndakato muwedzera mamwe makore akawanda nezvishoma zvandakakwanisa kumu onesawo. Ndinongo shuvira kuti Mwari ngaamuchengete nguvadzose. Dzimwe hama dzinoita zvinhu nekusziva zvinotokonzera kuparara kwe tariro yemunhu mukurarama. Vamwewo vanozviita nekuti munhu akaita chirwere kunyanya ichochi che HIV/AIDS, vanopedza nguva vachikusema panze pekukubatsira kuti ugwinye.

Ndakazodzokera hangu kunogara nemurume. Murume wangu akazotsvaga basa, iniwo ndakazoenda kumusha ndokuno tora vana kuti vadzoke. Ndadzoka ndakazo simudzirai mberi nyaya yemabasa emawoko kuti tibatsirane kuriritira mhuri.

Ndaka mutsiridza bhindauro rekutengesha hove.

Zvakatanga kufamba, ndaibuda ndopinda mundima murume wangu nekoko inini nekoko, taisangana pakati.

Murume akazoita pfungwa dzekuti ndaakusimuka kubva muguta reHarare nekuti basa raayishanda aiti harisi kumupa mari yakawanda. Ndakamutsigira, akarurama akananga kuguta re Victoria Falls. Ndakasara zvakanaka nevana, muHarare ndikaronga kuenda kuchikoro ndokuno dzidzira kubatsira kurapa varwere, ndakaita zvifundo zvekuve Nurse Aide ndikapedza. Kutengesha ndakaenderera mberi nako ndichiraramisa mhuri, ndigere nevana vangu. Ndakapedza makore maviri ndichigara ndega navo vana. Kusvika, ndazoona kuti, upenyu hwekuita seshirikadzi iye murume ari mupenyu hauchanakidza. Ndakazoronga kutevera Mwamuna wangu.

Ndaka mhara muVictoria Falls guta rinoyevedza rinofarirwa nevashanyi vekunze. Ndakayevadzwa neku kuchena kwemu migwagwa yemo, vanhu havarasire tsvina pesepese kuVictoria Falls. Asi wangu murume haana kuvandudzika hunhu nekuda kwekunaka kwe guta ratakanga tavekugara. Unhu hwake hauna kuita mutsauko kana napadiki pose. Ndaifunga kuti zvese zvipingaidzo zvataka sangana nazvo mukurarama tichikura tese semurume nemukadzi zvicha ita kuti akurewo paunhu hwake. Asi ndaizvi bata kumeso semwana wegudo. Hapana chakambenge chashanduka paari Emmanuel. Ngoma yaingove ndiyo ndiyo, musambo hauna kunzvangama.

Mhirizhonga yaingove ndiwo mugariro sezvaitika kubva tisati tave nemwana wekutanga. Kuwanza madzimai haana kurega, zvese hazvo zvandambo nyora pamusoro aizvidzokorora nemazvo. Ndakambo

shinga ndichiti pada zvinoenda nepamwe asi mari ndaingonyimwa. Ndakatoona kuti ndinofa nenzara nevana ndikada kutarisira chinhu kubva kunaBaba vevana.

Ndakamboshinga kwemwedzi mitanhatu ndichi shivirira nekuedza kumisa imba yangu. Ndaka tsvaga basa ndikariwana rekuva mutengeswi wemuchitoro. Ndakashanda kwe mwedzi inokwana mitatu bedzi ndipo pakabva pauya zidutu reFivhirimupengo (COVID-19), chazezesa mutunhu unemago. Hurumende yedu yakabva yadzika mitemo yekuchengetedza utano hweruzhinji, kusanganisira kumiswa kwemabasa mazhinji.

Takagara mudzimba, nekutya chirwere cheCorona virus asi isu vamwe takanga tatoiswa mudanga reMhumhi isu tiri Hwai. Hakuna kupera mwedzi, zvi bhakera zvakange zvobaka moto muwanano yedu. Vanhuwee zvamunoono imwe hondo yemumba inopfuura hondo yemiseve. Potsepotse inotokwikwidzana nehondo yenyika mbiri, Russia neUkraine. Nekuda kwekuti unogara munhu wakabatira ura mumawoko. Unokotsira wakavhura ziso rimwechete kurikutya kudzipwa huro uri kutsi kwehope, ukafuga rako wega. Wangu Emmanuel aitove akasiyana naEmmanuel mudzikinuri wezvitadzo zvedu tese panyika. Aive bhinya.

Kutukirirwa, kunyimwa mari yechikafu, kudzikisirwa, kushungurudzwa zvese nevana, kushoropodzwa pazerevanhu, kuhurirwa masikati machena, manyembe zvese nekurohwa.

Ndakasvika pakuramwa imba ndikasiya zvese nevana ndikadzoka kuHarare kwe mwedzi wese. Ndaive ndavhiringika pfungwa chaidzo kuti chokwadi zano ndoita ripi. Munhu unosvika pakugumirwa zvekuti unotadza kana kuziva zvauro, unofamba uchi peperetswa nemhepo, pamwe pachu unotozo vhunduka motokari yamira pamberi pako wona kuti aikaka ndadimbura mugwagwa ndiri mukufunganya kwakadzama zvekusamboona kwandiri kuenda. Ndakange ndatove murwere wepfungwa. Chinonyano dariso kushaya kwekupotera. Ukaenda kuhama unongonzi shingirira ndizvo zvinoita dzimba. Ndakazopedza hangu mwedzi ndirimu muGuta guru reHarare, asi mwoyo nendangariro dzaive dzave kuvana vandakasiya. Ndaka zvisvingisa zvekare ndikakoka simba rangu rese ndokudzokera kuMurume.

### **Kubuda Mazviri.**

Victoria Falls ndakawana isina kushanduka zvizhinji, yaive yakandimirira. Kufefetera kweMapopoma kwakandi nyevenutsa asi kahana kairova apo neapo, kuri kutya Mhumhi yangu yandaiziva unhu hwayo.

Shiri inemuririro wayo hairegedze. Chakanga chakabaya chikatyokera chemhirizhonga, pane wangu mudiwa Emmanuel. Ngoma ndiyo ndiyo. Ndakatoona kuti kugara pamba bedzi, ndichivhayirirwa nekunyimwa mari yechikafu chevana hazvibude. Ndaka tangazve kutsvaga basa. Sezvineiwo, Mwari akandinzwa ndikawana basa rekuva Mutengeswi wemuBhawa. Mari yandaihora yaive nani chaizvo zvekuti kana kutenga zvipfeko, kudyawo tunonaka, mari yechikoro yevana ndakange ndoitawo sharaude.

Murume wangu akatanga kubatikana nekuita godo pazviri, Hondo yedu mumba ikabva yachi kora semuto wembatatsi. Haa apandipo pandakaona kuti uku kwandaiita kwaive kutambisa nguva. Zvandai tarisira mukuvaka musha zvaisavepo mundangariro dzeMurume wangu. Aitove mombe yemashanga kubva tiri mukomana nemusikana. Aisa tsiurika uye aive bhinya. Pamwe zvichibvawo mukurerwa kwake handzive. Nyangwe ndaimuda sei aitongove neunhu hwake ihwohwo. Ndakasarudza kuramba ndichimuda, asi tichigara kwakasiyana. Ndakaona zviya zvinonzi nevakuru, Tsuru naNungu mumwena mumwe chete abaiwa ngaabude. Hayewa minzwa yaEmmanuel yakanga yabaya nyamanhete yaSarah saka ndakatsidza kuti musha ngausare hawo ini nevana titize nehutano nehupenyu hwedu.

Saka iyezvino ndigere zvakanaka nevana vangu, tiri kudya tichiguta, ndavekuto kotsirawo hope dzemandorokwati. Kare ndaikotsira hope dzeTsuru, kuita kurara wakavhura ziso rimwechete kurikutya kudzipwa huro usiku. Ndave kuto rongawo kutanga bhindauro rangu rinozovandudza magariro neupenyu

hwevana vangu nevabereki vangu. Manje manje muchaona chidziro chavekusimuka chichivakwa neni cheimba inoshevedzwa zita rangu mbune.

Kutapurirwa utachiwana hazvirevi kuti ndiko kuguma kwehupenyu. Hongu vanhukadzi tine tsekwende yekuti ukashungurudzwa mumba nemurume wako, ukati utaurirewo hama dzako kana madzisahwira unongo kurudzirwa kuti, ushingirire nekuti zvinongonzi ndizvo zvinoita imba. Shinga. Vanhurume vanongonzi shinga uri murume iye munhu achitokuvarira mukati. Munhu unoororwa usina zvaunoziva, usina kana pfungwa yekuita gumbo mumba gumbo panze, unenge utoro ngirozi zvayo asi wakagara mumba mako unoerekana waigirwa chirwere chepabonde kana utachiwana.

Sezvinoitikawo, takatarisana ne vacheche. Vanenge vari mudumbu vachimirirawo zuva rekuzvarwa asi wanike vatapurirwa utachiwana pasinawo chavaita napaduku pose. Ndizvo zvinorwadza nyaya ye hiv kwese kwatiri.

Wochitarisa rimwe divi, varume ivava vashoma vavo vanobvuma kunovhenekwa ropa. Zvinoziva uye zvinorwadza kuti vamwe varume havadzoreki. Kana agwinyirira paunhu hwake haukwane kumutendeutsa kunyanya nyaya dzezvirwere zvepabonde. Unonzwa munhu achiti, handidi zvekuvhenekwa ropa, nekuti ndakagwinya. Saka unhu ihwohu hunoisa vanhukadzi varimudzimba panguva yakaoma, uye panjodzi huru.

Vanhukadzi vechidiki ndinoda kuvapa yambiro pamusoro pekunge vashungurudzwa mudzimba. Hazvina kunaka kuti ushingirire iwe uchipinda munjodzi. Uka shungurudzwa muwanano chimbidzika kutsvaga rubatsiro usati wazo sakadzwa nekurohwa, kurasikirwa neupenyu kana kukanganiswa utano. Unotsvirei kana svutugadzike isina tsvigiri? Tinozviziva kuti hapana asingade kuroorwa, uye hapana asingade murume, kwozotiwo zvekare hapana asingade muchato. Asika kana imba yacho ichiuya nemubairo weku shungurudzwa, kutukwa, kuitirwa gumbo mumba gumbo panze, kuvigirwa zvirwere zvepabonde, kubviswa mazino nekurohwa, kusiiwa waremadzwa nemhirizhonga, kusara uine mavanga pamuviri kana kushungurudzirwa vana.

Vana ivavo vanozokurawo vachifunga kuti zvaitwa amai ndizvozvinoitwa munhukadzi wese. Chinova chinhu chakaipa kuti vana vadzidze zvisizvo mukukura kwavo zvozova kanganisa mukumisawo misha yavo mune ramangwana.

Inini ndinoti zvitori nani kuzviraramira, wozvitsvagira basa, uchizvi riritira neyako mari, isina zvibinge. Kurarama neutachiwana kunoda usina zvinokudya mumwoyo, kana kushaya kugadzikana kana kushaya rugare. Utachiwana hwe HIV hunokasika kukusanganisa nemusiki, kana usina runyararo nemufaro mumba mako kana muupenyu hwako. Kazhinji ukaita murume anoku shungurudza mazuva ako panyika semunhu anorarama neutachiwana anoita mashoma. Ukaita murume anoku shungurudza nekukunyima mari, kana kukunyima bonde, kana kukushaisa mufaro bedzi mumba haurarami nguvarefu.

Kusave nerugare ikoko kunowedzera mukana wako wekuita zvimwe zvirwere se cervical cancer. Zvinoziva zvaita nyore kubatwa kwako ne BP kana chirwere cheshuga. Nekuda kwekuti unenge ungori munhu wekuchema bedzi nguva nenguva.

Aiwa madzimai ngati simukei tisimudzirane, uye ngatizvisimudzirei, ngatisa manikidzire rudo paunogaro shungurudzwa. Ini ndinoti ahewa ndichawanawo anondidawo nezvandiri agondidawo agondi simudzirawo, ndigowanawo zvese zvandakashaya ndiri pamurume wangu wemakore Emmanuel. Ndakamusiyi ndichirikumuda. Asika vana vangu havanga rambe vachiona pfumvu nekuda kwerudo rwusina kurongeka, rudo rwuri pakati pemhirizhonga rwunopedzesera rwave ruvengo rwepwere dziri mumba imomo. Nekuti ukaramba uchisasika vana pamhirizhonga vachakurawo vari varidzi vemhirizhonga.

Mhirizhonga irimuropa mangu(HIV) iri nyore kurwizana nayo, pane mhirizhonga yekuzvimbiswa newako wepamwoyo.

## **As I live by Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile**

I met him when I was going through financial turmoil. He was a prophet who predicted that all would be well. Having been married for 3 years, a marriage that failed, I never thought I had found “the one”. I knew he was philandering from the day I met him. I never listened to my instinct. All I did was love him with everything I had. My little money and risking the life of my daughter in the process. I never wanted more children I was okay with my first born who came out of wedlock. But I am certain that he mixed some taelo (Zion Christian Church Teas) for me because we had been dating for 4 years without my falling pregnant. The day I fell pregnant, unlike my first pregnancy, I became sick and he instantly knew I was pregnant. I still knew he was a womaniser. Was I happy with the news? - No I wasn't. I had to confirm with a gynaecologist who immediately booked an appointment for the tests to be conducted. I was 36 years old. Busy with my PhD at the time and getting ready to travel on a scholarship to the United States of America, Rutgers University sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

I cannot recall the dates because my subconscious has decided to forget that fateful day when my life changed drastically affecting my entire livelihood and my being. I remember the year, it was 2011 around August as the semester year in the US starts in September. When the phone rang and the doctor requested that I urgently visit his rooms I knew something was wrong. As I got into his rooms, he broke the news to me that he had sent my blood tests to the laboratory and that both came back with an HIV diagnosis. My entire body was shaking. He counselled me and gave me options. One of them was keep the baby and know that there is treatment and that adherence to treatment will be life-saving. The second option, he advised was abortion. I couldn't think at that time. While I never planned to have a second child, I knew that abortion would be the last thing that I would consider. Coming from a rural background, this was the first time I would hear of such a suggestion and I consider myself a rural girl.

I left the doctors room and went to my car and cried so hard. I called George and he said the diagnosis was not true. I called my friend who also suggested abortion. I had no time for any of that as all travel arrangements had been made for the US. I was then instantly referred to an HIV specialist in the same hospital who put me on anti-retroviral therapy instantly. Three days later my daughter and I left the country. By then my skin had what looked like eczema. And I did not disclose my HIV status to the scholarship managers due to shame and fear of being stigmatized.

I immediately had to look for treatment options available in the US and I visited the first hospital I came across in Newark. I had to undergo a battery of tests and because I was a foreigner I couldn't be put on the treatment programmes or trials that were being conducted in America at the time, the most well-known being the one Michael Johnson was undergoing. I didn't qualify for it. During this time I was taking all my medication and my eldest child was taking good care of me amidst her school adjustment and challenges. The treatment programme and the battery of tests in the US are vastly different from the ones in South Africa, which resulted in my funds being depleted sooner than expected.

The Ford Foundation New York Office became aware of my situation, and called the South African office and informed them about my HIV status and threatened to cancel the scholarship. In their eyes I had deceived and cheated my way into the US and wanted to use my student status to give birth in America so my baby would be given US citizenship. My life spiralled out of control. When I left South Africa, George was still residing in my townhouse. Part of my programme was that I would teach a module (class) in the US. I fought hard to remain in America for six months while I finalised my programme. I continued to receive treatment and prepared my exit from the US. I was so distressed by the treatment I received from the Ford Foundation staff and I couldn't share it with my mentor, who had paved the way for me to be in the US. I couldn't share what was going on with my daughter as she was too young to be burdened with such information, so I bottled it all in.

We returned to South Africa in January 2012 in time for me to give birth on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2012. George was still philandering claiming that he couldn't stand to sleep with a pregnant woman. I can never forget how he would disappear for days on end, leaving me when I was almost nine months pregnant with my daughter. I consulted with my gynaecologist who immediately said my daughter was in distress and a Caesarean section to deliver the baby had to be scheduled immediately. George disappeared and I was yet again on my own, similar to the way I was alone when I was diagnosed with HIV. I needed a blood transfusion, and at this time he saw it fit to come and collect the car keys. This was the beginning of the end for me. Another failed relationship with a child out of wedlock. I went into induced labour and I was in so much pain and turmoil. I gave birth on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February and I had a breakdown in hospital and had to be isolated from everyone else. George was nowhere to be found. I was on my own. I had to call a friend to fetch me from hospital.

My daughter was healthy and I had blood clots but I soon recovered. In all this, George was still nowhere to be found. I had not shared anything with my family. I was deeply scared, scarred and ashamed. I raised my daughters on my own. He occasionally dropped by and we continued having a relationship. Then I stopped taking my ARVs in 2012 because I was ashamed. How would I explain the pills to those at home? George convinced me there was no such thing as me being HIV positive, and that it would have been revealed to him as a prophet that I was HIV positive, and I believed him.

Fast forward to 2015. I was seconded to a management position in June 2014 and it was hectic. Initially I wanted to lose weight and I went on a Banting diet. I lost a lot of weight and I thought I was now becoming healthy. By August of 2015 I developed a rash all over my body and I remember at some point my blood pressure was dangerously high. My subconscious told me it was time to take medication, but I remained in denial and I did not take medication. It was not until I had stroke symptoms at work and was admitted in hospital where I asked the doctors to conduct blood tests and check my HIV status. The results came and my viral load was over 2 million and CD 4 count was 15. Since I was admitted in a hospital far away from home, I requested that I be transferred to a hospital near home so that I would go back to the same doctor who I had consulted prior to my US visit. As I was driving home, I was so weak and I didn't know if and how I would reach home. I managed and my phone kept on ringing from the doctor's rooms advising me that I was not going to survive. I was in search of a doctor who would have faith in me, faith that I would live to raise my children.

I searched on my tablet for details for an HIV specialist. I found the email address of the late Dr Sindi Van Zyl on Twitter. I reached out to her and told her my story. She immediately referred me to a physician who became my specialist. While I was undergoing treatment my work circumstances were difficult. I had disagreements with my secretary over her lack of work ethic and some colleagues who were not happy with the ways in which I was changing the work ethic in the department creating additional strain and stress for me.

I began my treatment regime and had a massive allergic reaction which landed me in hospital yet again. My first born was so scared and worried that I was going to die. The doctor eliminated some medication he thought was causing the reaction. I was so weak and I was fighting to stay alive. As I recovered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of taking the medication, I looked through my work calendar. There posted in my calendar was my HIV status. While I was in hospital I had shared my password with some of my colleagues. In fact even prior to this, I had shared it with my secretary when my computer needed to be fixed. I was traumatized. Again George had disappeared for months and I was on my own with my kids. The shame of my colleagues finding out about my HIV status from my calendar which I shared with some colleagues was unbearable. I remember driving to the campus at 3 am to make sure that I changed my password as when I tried to log in from home, I wasn't able to. When I drove in, I changed my password and deleted the calendar notification regarding my HIV status

This was the beginning of yet another layer of trauma. Being the fighter that I am, I called a couple of colleagues and disclosed my status to them. This was before I decided to call in a departmental meeting and in tears I disclosed in front of all staff members. That was a really hard thing to do. I reported the case of this breach of privacy to the university, whose outcome was I should not have shared my password with anyone and therefore there was no case and no supporting disciplinary action. Traumatized at the injustice I had to live this fact and know that in this world of work, justice is always denied.

I met with my director and broke down regarding my situation, and also wrote to the Vice Chancellor but still nothing was done. I continued with my treatment and George reappeared after about 6 months and he was skin and bones. His physical appearance made me very aware of my own mortality. I had also lost so much weight that I was a laughing stock to those around me. At this stage I had disclosed my status to my parents and my siblings but not to my daughter for fear of burdening her with too much to process. I only disclosed my status to her in 2021 and her reaction was that of fear. Fear that she had also contracted the disease. I could feel her anger towards George who, by the way, had died during the year, though I can't remember the exact date.

This is my story and my life with HIV.

It is hard to have to take the medication on a daily basis. I pray for a miracle that would allow us to live freely without worrying and obsessing about blood that is contaminated. I pray for freedom from stigma. I pray to live long enough to see my children become adults and have their own kids. I pray to live.

### **Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile Bio**



Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile, 48, born to the late Nzameko Dastile and Shina Dastile is a mother of two young women, Mihle (10), Sihle (18). She is Director of Postgraduate Studies at Walter Sisal University. She is a Full Professor of Criminology and has published on issues of female criminality, de-coloniality and African centred methodologies.

# **The Perfect Hostess ...am in charge, today and into the future by Bella**

I am a perfect hostess, I am in charge, and you are just a passenger with no say in the journey

I used to have HIV tests done regularly from the time I decided I wanted to become a mother. I am a 52 year old, healthy, single mother of two beautiful children, (now adults), son 28 and daughter 25. After the death of my partner in December 2001, I decided to go and have my regular HIV test and lo and behold my results came back positive. I had last had a negative result in 1999 when my partner and I were trying to have a baby. I remember it was in May 2002 and had started dating again so I thought it safe to find out my HIV status before things got serious with my new partner.

Let me take you back a bit. I met my late partner in 1998 and we were trying for a baby since the time we met. I used to go to my doctor and have HIV tests, the tests would be negative. I remember my doctor telling me to bring my partner for testing as well but it was not to be.

After his death I had a serious conversation with myself and decided to go back and have an HIV test done, just to be sure and put my wondering mind at peace. I went to the "New Start" clinic, this time around with my friend. We were counselled and tested together, the counsellor thought we were partners. We did, however, get our results separately. She got her results first and she came out happy. I went in to get my results and I cannot say I was surprised when I received the positive result. I asked the counsellor questions I had and from that moment I told myself that I would take charge of my health for the sake of my children.

Dying, just because I was HIV positive was and still is not an option. My friend was on cloud nine and I couldn't bring myself to tell her that I had tested positive because I didn't want to burst her bubble. I was all smiles and I want to believe she thought I had tested negative as well. When we got back to the office, two of my colleagues who knew we had gone for testing asked me how it went. I told them I had tested positive but they didn't believe me. I think they expected me to be sad or maybe even crying. Was I in shock? Maybe. Was I in denial? No. I must say, I somehow expected my result to be positive. Don't ask me how, but deep down in my heart, I suspected that I had exposed myself to the virus and I had no one to blame besides myself. I believe I should have insisted that we go for testing together with my late partner but hey, love took over, life happened!

I told my sister, my boss, my two former boy friends who happened to be fathers of my children that I tested positive. I went to my doctor and he insisted on taking the test again.

When I went back to get my results at his rooms he confirmed the positive result. Now this was before the Test and Treat era we are currently enjoying. I was healthy and my CD4 was over 500, I was told to practise safe sex, eat healthy, avoid stress at all costs and live a positive life and have CD4 tests every 6 months.

This I did until 2009 when I turned 40. Test and treat was already in motion so I went back to my doctor and he encouraged me to go on treatment. He referred me to another doctor who is an expert in HIV and was immediately put on treatment. Since 2002, I had not had any problems with my health. I was eating healthy, the only thing I could not stop, or at least, do in moderation, was the alcohol!

## **DISCLOSURE**

I chose or rather should say, I choose who I tell that I am living with HIV positive. The reason I wanted to know my status was for my own sake, so that I would take care of myself, the "Me" factor. I now work with women living with HIV and have been on national television and local print media. Those who watch TV and read local newspapers saw me or read about me and made their own conclusions. I believe, as

long as I know and am taking care of my health that's all that matters. I talk about living with HIV so that I help the next person who does not know their status and is afraid to know.

Stigma is still very much out there, stifling and silently killing people. It is my contribution in the fight against stigma that I love myself and openly say, "Hey, you do not own me, I manage you not to cause any stress to me."

So I encourage those who do not know their status to go and get tested so that they start living a healthy life and not wait until it is too late to get on treatment.

At many times people talk about so and so being HIV+ yet, that so and so told them in confidence. You find people in general talking about someone's HIV+ status without their consent. If someone told you as a confidante, keep it that way.

So I have my own opinion when it comes to disclosure. Am all for one to know his or her status and start taking care of their health. One should disclose, only when ready to do so. Disclosure is not an event, it is a process, a journey in the new life.

### **DEPORTED**

In 2014, I experienced stigma and discrimination at its worst. I got a 3 month visa to travel to the UAE. So naturally I had to travel with my 3 months supply of my ARVs. Little did I know that I would be treated like a criminal upon arrival at Dubai International Airport. I had cleared with the immigration and on my way out was asked to put my luggage on scanner.

They saw my medication and asked me to open my suitcase. They asked me to go in a room where they started asking me what the tablets were for and how come I had so many.

Those days I used to take 2 tablets a day so I had enough for 3 months. The minute I mentioned HIV, I was bundled again to another room where I sat alone for 3 hours whilst they were consulting their doctor. They came back with their doctor who assured them I was fine to enter their country after he looked at my notes my doctor had written on my card.

The airport officials would not have it hence I was told to go back to Zimbabwe. I was allowed one phone call to tell my brother what was happening. I was put on the next flight back home accompanied by police officers as if I had committed a huge crime. When we arrived in Zimbabwe, I was told to remain seated and wait for someone to accompany me to the police post at the airport. Luckily, the Emirates guy who came to fetch me asked me what the problem was. I told him I was not allowed to get in the country because I am living with HIV. He was surprised by all this and did not even take me to the police post but told me how sorry he was and told me to go home.

The whole ordeal traumatised me and when I told my doctor what happened he could not believe that in this day and age we still have countries that treat people living with HIV in that manner. That part of the world still requires massive sensitisation to come to parity with understanding HIV issues.

Anyway my brother was determined that I visit him and my visa was somehow not cancelled so off I went back again but this time did not go via Dubai International Airport. I arrived at Abu Dhabi Airport and whisked through without any problem. I had, however, a month's supply of my ARVs. My brother tried to buy ARVs for me in Abu Dhabi but one month's supply was going for US\$700. I told him to forget about it so I stayed for 2 months without my meds. When I came back to Zimbabwe my CD4 had dropped from 1000+ to 300. I was lucky that I did not get any opportunistic infections, thanks mainly to my diet.

I wonder how the UAE is going to treat people who will be going to Qatar for FIFA 2022. I am certain, some of them would like to pass through or spend time in Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

Would I go back again to the UAE? Hell a big NO, unless they change their policies on people living with HIV.



**MY FABULOUS LIFE** To date my fabulous journey with HIV has been amazingly beautiful. I receive my medication at a health facility with dedicated health personnel. I have my viral load checked once a year and I also have cervical cancer screening every 12 months. I count myself blessed because I know that there are women who do not have access to health services, especially in the hard to reach areas in our country. Women who do not even know their HIV status, women who do not have access to sexual and reproductive health services. I have had conversations with women who have never had a cervical cancer screening, let alone, have knowledge what it is all about. We call upon related ministries, parliamentarians to continue working hard to make sure universal health coverage

becomes a reality for all. We call on community champions to raise awareness. To more than 20 years of living positive with HIV, I am healthy and HIV has not had any negative impact on my health. I refuse to let HIV define me. Besides the trauma I suffered when I travelled in 2014, I have had an amazing relationship with the virus that I host in my body, I have suppressed it and never will it be detected again.

### **Lessons Learnt**

- ❖ My mental health comes first hence I stay away from toxic relationships. I try by all means to surround myself with like-minded positive people. I live each day as it is my last day on this beautiful earth. Live, love, laugh and dance.
- ❖ It is very important for people to get tested and know their status. You save your life and your partner/s by knowing your status and getting on treatment. HIV is not a death sentence. You can live a long productive life and you can grow old with HIV. Undetectable = Untransmittable: U=U means that people with HIV who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load (the amount of HIV in the blood) by taking antiretroviral cannot pass on the virus to others. Practice safe sex to avoid unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) Exercise and eat healthy .
- ❖ HIV treatment is available for free, funded by the Global Fund, PEPFAR, Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation and many more donors who sacrifice. Locally, we have the Aids Levy, which needs boosting, in order to cater for more from the domestic fund.
- ❖ There is still no cure for HIV/AIDS. Know your HIV/AIDS status, if positive get treatment and live a healthy life.
- ❖ Talk to someone, have a confidante you talk to when life becomes overwhelming which happens to most of us.
- ❖ Forgive yourself, embrace and validate yourself. #Blessed

#Gratitude

#Positive Living

## Isabel Bio



Isabel Rutendo Elizabeth Dzvova is a 52 year old mother of two (son 28; daughter 25). She was born in Norton and did her primary and secondary education in Norton and Harare respectively. A humanitarian at heart Isabel has worked in various organizations as a Personal Assistant before joining the NGO sector where she worked as a Program Officer. She studied Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe. Thereafter she worked with children with disability before joining Zimbabwe Women Living with HIV National Forum. Isabel is a Community Health Activist and is living positively with HIV for the past 20 years. A team player of note, Isabel thrives to make the world a better place and advocates for access to quality and affordable health services for all. She is currently working tirelessly to raise awareness about challenges and gaps mental health patients face and ending stigma and discrimination towards mental health patients. She is doing this by engaging communities to support and accept mental health illness as any other health problem.

## God, love and belief by Red

I had to bargain with God. My fate was in His hands and only God could fix all which had gone wrong. Each and every day I would say the lord's prayer; "Our Father who art in heaven", towards the end I would ask, please could you increase the days of my life on this earth. What else could I have done? I was a new mom to my beautiful daughter who was only four years old at the time. I was instructed to do these prayer sessions by a sangoma (shaman, healer, priest, and/or prophet) who I had met through a guy I had a crush on.

What a bizarre story because in all honesty, I liked the guy who had such a humble spirit and I don't know what made him come to see me with his sangoma friend on that day.

The sangoma, let's call him \*Andile, out of nowhere, just did a reading on me without my consent. He said I should get tested for HIV because all he sees around me is HIV and that I would die before 2015. I remember being so confused but more than that, scared. "You have to beg God and ask Him to extend the days of your life", he said.

From that day on, I would live my life carrying shame, fear, and uncertainty and analysing every little event in my life. I became obsessed with his readings and ensuring that God was hearing my prayers. I spent a lot of time with Andile because each day, there was an emergency and something I needed to do to prevent the tragedy.

Prior to meeting Andile, my life was perfect. I had just turned 30, I had a good job, a house I loved and a car that was okay for my lifestyle. I felt that the only missing thing in my life was a man who loved me. At the time, I worked for a big retail group as an HR Officer. Thabo worked in the warehouse and had a lower position to mine. I liked him because he was a good listener and would make time for me. Even though he was not good looking, he had a seemingly heart of gold and was helpful to the entire work community. One day, he asked to come see where I lived and it was okay because we had gotten much closer even though we were not officially dating.

Thabo was from Kwazulu Natal (KZN). He spoke in a beautiful Zulu accent and was proud of his culture. The first time we made love, I was convinced that nobody had ever made love to me with such passion. He made my entire body shake. We spent more time together and our bond grew stronger. One day he asked me to come with him to meet his mom in KZN. We drove off and it was beautiful. I had already met his Johannesburg based family and I felt as though I was part of their clan.

As we made love one day, he asked if I had ever tried anal sex. I had never done that and because we were so tight, I was open to trying it out. He guided me through it and was gentle with lubricant and everything that would help me relax. It felt like heaven for both of us. This was the first time where we would have unprotected sex. We were addicted to our sexual pleasure and we started spending nights together.

On this particular night. In my sleep I saw a big, long, brown snake. It climbed my bed slowly from the side of our feet. It placed its body in the centre and slithered all the way up towards my head. I could feel the snake's cold and soft body. I woke up and the snake put its head up in anger. I got out the bed and the snake was gone. I thought the nightmare was terrible but made nothing of it. Little did I know that the visits from the snake would not stop. It tormented my sleep. I was exhausted and too afraid to sleep. I would ask people to interpret the dream, I would pray but nothing would make it stop.

Six months into our relationship. I was at the office, happily doing my work when a call came through for me. It was a woman by the name of Lerato. She introduced herself as Thabo's wife and she wanted to know if he had told me that the two of them have been HIV+ for many years now. Shocked by the news, I listened

to her swear and call me all sort of names. She said I deserved what had happened to me because I was a bitch. The following day at the office I felt so sick. I had tonsils and a fever. I remember locking my office and putting my body on the carpet for sleep. Later that afternoon, I told Thabo what had happened and that we needed to get tested.

I went to the clinic at work and shared my ordeal with the nursing sister who was also my friend. I could not give her the name of my lover because my relationship at work was a secret and nobody even suspected we were together. Sr. Nhlanhla gave me the prick and in my entire life, I have never cried like I cried on that day. She could not help me and eventually we were both crying. Miraculously, my results came back negative. I felt better for the moment, but I had to come back for another test in about 3 months' time. In my head, I thought, "that Lerato woman lied". I believed that if my results are negative, then automatically it means Thabo's results are also negative. In the next weeks, I would ask Thabo to bring me his results but he never got to it. He said he was negative and I believed him.

The snake in my dreams persisted. I thought I was losing my mind. The sex was no longer enjoyable, and I insisted we go together to do a test. I scheduled an appointment at a clinic far from our workplace. We went early in the morning. The nurse asked if we wanted to receive our results as a couple and we agreed. She placed them in front of us and said one result came back positive and the other result came back negative. As she handed me the negative result, I turned to look at Thabo. He was quiet and showed no emotion at all.

In the elevator on our way back home he said to me, "God's intervention is upon your life". I asked him if he had known his status all along and he did not answer. That same day, he posted pictures of himself with his brothers in Leondale. They were having some party and celebrating something. The pictures were on Facebook. I felt betrayed, angry and sad that my life almost took such a different turn. Yet Thabo did not care at all. He carried on as if nothing had ever happened.

The next months of my life were spent with multiple HIV tests. I never believed my results so I tested all the time. There were talks about people who are carriers. I thought I was a carrier of HIV. I believed that my HIV did not show on tests but it was there in my blood. There is something about believing that you are a carrier of disease. That thing kills the spirit. It is heavy and a burden to carry. I could no longer work efficiently because I had no one to talk to at work. "Why did I date a colleague to begin with?" I judged myself. He on the other hand praised me for my silence and he said I am a very kind human being for protecting our image at work.

I moved on with my life, he was still with Lerato and they had a baby together. It was around this time when the guy who was a sangoma came into my life. He was adamant that I would die by 2015 if not earlier. I believed him because he had picked up the HIV thing without me sharing it with him. I tested again and still, my results came back negative. He would call in the middle of the night and tell me there's an emergency and that I need to pray. I lived a very strange life. One of paranoia and fear. I could no longer think for myself and this almost broke my relationship with my mother.

I would disappear with the sangoma. Do rituals and ask for forgiveness and healing. One day, in my car the guy started touching me. He put his penis inside my vagina.

He had his way with me and to date, I don't know what I feel about this!

Our relationship changed. He would embody split personalities. He would speak in voices I could not recognize, and he would be violent and speak down on me. I knew that I needed to get away. I deleted his contact details. I blocked him on all social media spaces. Although I was still afraid, I started a new life waiting for 2015.

In 2014 I met a guy. He was raised in a staunch Christian family. We would go to church together and he was the first person to look me in the eye and say, “you will not die, I promise you”. The next years of my life would be in church, praying and more secretly bargaining for life. We got married and had a daughter in 2016. He asked to raise my elder daughter as his own and we started a new life together as a family. When my youngest daughter was born, I could not bring myself to breast feed my baby. I could not bear the thought of passing on this undetectable virus to my daughter. No matter how much my gyneacologist told me about HIV, I just could not do it.

As I write this story, the year is 2022. I am alive and I’m grateful for my life. I cannot believe how much it still hurts. If you are wondering what I have learned from my story. Well, I realise now that I protected Thabo by keeping quiet. I will never know if he’s continued to do the same thing to other women. My silence only empowered him. I also learned that healers are human beings. Even when they present themselves as healers. They too carry their own demons. How was it right that a person/sangoma who was meant to help me ended up sleeping with me in my moment of confusion and vulnerability? I feel disgust just thinking of him.

I take full responsibility for my decisions. Even though I feel wronged by so many people, I believe the one thing that life has always asked of me is to love myself. Life has asked me to love myself, pay attention and listen. In that order. That is my assignment for this lifetime. The snake left my dreams right after I had learnt the truth.

### **Red Bio**

Red is a human resource officer and lover of life.

## **Family, Friends and Colleagues: Grappling with HIV/AIDS: Stories from near and far! by Boitshepo Bibi Giyose**

My story is a complex one; coming from a country that at one point that was grossly ravaged by HIV and AIDS – the small population country of Botswana with just about 2 million people back in the eighties.

Let me start with the end in mind. Believe me it is not an easy and ordinary reality to swallow today. It simply gives one goose bumps, if not, serious anxiety and panic attacks. Here is what it is; an old aunt of mine lost all 6 of her children, one to cancer and the 5 to HIV and AIDS. Working in the health and nutrition space, it hit me like a ton of bricks as the science back in the 1980s was still very scanty around testing, prevention, mitigation, and management/treatment.

I saw it all! At times the scientist in me felt like I was drowning in a sea of frustration, confusion, and helplessness.

Botswana, in terms of percentage of HIV cases, was the highest globally with more than 30 percent infections, and with so many families equally affected. With the science being at a rudimentary stage back in the days, many lives were lost, even more suffered with the debilitating conditions of opportunistic infections. The burden became too heavy on the caretakers of those infected.

But why am I writing this or these stories? I write for a myriad of reasons as I have been deeply affected by HIV/AIDS from extremely close quarters. First, I had to deal with breaking the news, then there was the issue of shame and stigma by the one infected and the family in denial. You see, although HIV can be contracted via multiple routes or pathways i.e. unprotected sex, blood transfusions, drug users sharing of needles, and mother to child transmission, society tended to only focus on the sex part – as if to say that the person was promiscuous or anything of the sort. I realized this myth which had to be quickly dispelled. The next was about how can one show, acceptance, compassion, and the preservation of the dignity of those suffering to help them improve their mental health. It was a fact that those infected faced a fair amount of rejection by loved ones and society at large, and were in some cases, treated as outcasts. For me this was one of the hardest traumas to deal with since I interacted with those infected and affected on a daily basis to provide nutrition advice and general health care.

Now here is the lowdown and how the dark cloud befell our family and beyond. One of my cousins, Benjamin, a young very handsome man in his late twenties was one of the first cases detected and diagnosed as having both TB and HIV. He was admitted to the TB ward at a clinic just behind the complex where I worked as nutrition support field staff. Hence I was able to check on him daily and consult with the nurses and doctors. Having just returned from my studies in nutrition and dietetics from the USA, I had very fresh knowledge of how to approach and manage these conditions.

After some time unfortunately as his condition deteriorated and he had to be transferred to the main hospital in Gaborone. When I went to check on him one day, I remember it like yesterday, when the attendant doctor called me to the side and said, “Do you know your brother has HIV and its progressing to AIDS?” Needless to say, I was stunned and totally disarmed by this news and revelation. In speaking to my aunt, his mother, she clearly was in denial, so I had to counsel her to calm her nerves and fears. Unfortunately, Benjamin succumbed to AIDS in the next few weeks in hospital. I was devastated. The cocktail of ARVs and palliative drugs were not enough to save his life.

As we thought we were recovering from this ordeal with Benjamin, we were hit by another HIV Tsunami. His younger brother Joseph, an engineer, was diagnosed as positive with HIV. He lived in the northern part of the country. Interestingly it was the doctors that called to break the news and I had to drive 450 kilometres to assess the situation and advise where I could, to put a dietary mitigation plan in place. He was clearly not responding to the medications, and it was not too long before he passed on leaving all of us in utter shock, disbelief, and pain.

More was yet to come unfortunately. Within a space of one year, their sister Mary-Anne also tested positive for HIV. She on the hand was never hospitalized, only given the treatment at the time to take from home. By this time, I had returned to the USA to pursue my studies in International Nutrition. Unfortunately I could not be close enough to offer much help and advice regularly. Because of the inherent stigmatization at the time, my strongest suspicion was that she defaulted on her treatment and hence her condition got to the stage of AIDS at a rather fast pace. Within no time she was bed ridden and needed much more care. Her 3 kids were still too young to fully understand their mother's condition. The husband tried but it was never easy for him, save for the home care visits by the clinic staff. Sadly Mary-Anne also passed on. Can you imagine my poor aunt's devastation?

Some years passed, I completed my studies and returned to my country. Excited to be back home, I checked on most of the family and friends to catch up. I vividly remember going to see my aunt who had come from the village at the time and was at her only living son's house not far from where I stayed. I was met with the horror of seeing Mary-Anne's younger sister, Karen in a wheelchair. My first thought was 'has she been involved in some accident'? It turned out she had been sick for a while and at the stage of AIDS itself. In speaking to my aunt, my eyes teared up so badly, I could only give her a bear hug with not many words to console her in these trials and tribulations she was facing. I was speechless.

My racing thoughts were questioning where was God in all this?

Karen's only brother, Baylor, at the time, was a fit young man working in one of the armed forces. So, he helped a lot to care for Karen and support his mother. What a generous act of resilience and tenacity after losing three siblings to the scourge of AIDS. It was not too long before Karen lost the battle and also succumbed to the disease. So, she too was gone. I was gutted to say the least. Another demise. Compared to the other siblings that passed on Karen suffered the most and for the longest time. Despite her suffering and debilitation she was a very cheerful person and always wore a captivating smile.

The avalanche came down hard when a few months after Karen was laid to rest Baylor was diagnosed with HIV which quickly moved to the stage of full-blown AIDS. Daily I witnessed my beloved cousin and the last one standing emaciate and wilt right before my eyes. The sight and reality were too much to bear. I had practically run out of words and tears. Where would I begin to comfort my aunt? She had been given such a short end of the stick it was incredible and difficult to fathom. As we watched him fade away, unable to get out of bed and unable to feed or keep anything down we just knew he was saying his goodbyes. To imagine that his then fiancé had just given birth to three beautiful triplets made it even more harrowing. These kids were born fatherless and how she was going to cope with the pain of losing her man and having to fend for the children was unfathomable. It just ripped my spirit and soul apart. True to form, Baylor left this side of this existence in no time.

My heartbroken aunt and uncle were at their wits end. How could this happen to them? What could they have done differently? Before these calamities befell them, they were a very industrious couple and great farmers – livestock (cattle, goats, and chickens), cereal crops (sorghum, millet, and maize), various pulses and beans, and vegetables. But all this lucrative self-reliance and livelihood and economic productivity was suddenly snatched away from them, and they were changed forever. It was excruciatingly heart-breaking

for me and other family members to witness such a well to do couple economically collapse almost at the snap of a finger. They tried to pick up the pieces. But it proved near impossible as they were beyond broken souls, sapped of every ounce of faith and strength.

These are the vicissitudes of the aftermath of HIV and AIDS and how it can rob lives and livelihoods in a flash. All five children gone, leaving numerous grandchildren behind for my old aunt and uncle to fend for all of them. What a load to bear!

This was the time around the early 1990's when the Botswana Government stepped up to the plate and put a robust HIV and AIDS programmes in place with its own resources. Free testing, counselling, food baskets, Anti-retroviral therapy (ARVs), palliative drugs for opportunistic infections and support for orphans and those families most in need as my aunt and her husband. Mind you in those days many countries had not yet awoken to this harsh reality and dragged their feet until things got totally out of hand. Whereas Botswana identified and owned the problem; took the bull by the horns and addressed the problem head on. Moreover, they also listened to the nutritionists and dietitians, recognizing that taking the HIV/AIDS drugs on empty stomachs and malnourished bodies was detrimental and killed people faster. So, they adopted a multipronged strategy to deal with the pandemic including the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT).

I will tackle the confusion with PMTCT and what the international community alongside big pharma and baby food industries advised to another time, another chapter. But suffice to say it left a mess and a trail of dead babies who ideally should not have died so unnecessarily. The recommendations were so skewed and not based on much practical science, let alone traditional and cultural knowledge systems and norms. When they finally realized their miseducation, and misinformation so much irreversible damage had been done. But thank the heavens, the world has finally awoken towards handling this thorny issue in a much better and rational manner, giving better outcomes to mother, infant and child. And yours truly was caught in these scientific and cultural feuds if not outright wars, whew how draining it was!

Just when I thought the family saga with HIV/AIDS was over, more tragedies struck. Three of my other cousins, two from my uncle – mom's older brother, and another from my mom's younger sister were diagnosed much later in the 2000's. By this time although advancements had been made in the science and understanding of HIV/AIDS, however the issues of stigma were still very palpable. This meant that not as many people were not coming forward to test and deal with the diagnosis and eventual prognosis until it was too late.

The first guy on my uncle's side of the family to get tested HIV positive was my cousin Pedro only in his mid-twenties. Pedro was an astute entrepreneur and businessmen who ran multiple outfits. At the same time, he was a bit of a rebel who hardly took anyone's advice about anything. Thus, trying to get him to eat well and reduce the tipple fell on barren ground. He continued with his party life as normal – according to him. Before long, his health got worse and his CD4 count dropped drastically leaving him no choice but to be literally dragged to the hospital kicking and screaming. After not so long a period, he got worse as he was unable to eat and had an extremely bad reaction to treatments. This was the beginning of the end for Pedro. He passed on. So sad to lose such a brilliant mind at something that could have been managed.

My uncle's son – my cousin Bryce, whom I was very close to, eventually got hospitalized with rather serious symptoms, after being in denial for the longest time. Despite my probing, and to get him to open up, he simply remained very reticent about seeking treatment. Though I didn't agree with his choices, I respected his space and let it slide. At this point I was once again living outside the country so did not have the requisite contact and access to help meaningfully. I wished I had been able to guide him in whichever way I could. That notwithstanding, I made a point of going home to check on him at hospital. Things did

not look good. He was on oxygen and drips. Being in the health field I had calculated the odds already. And true to form, he did not make it. He passed away a few days later. My heart was extra heavy going to his funeral in the village. Bryce had this infectious sense of humour, there was always happiness and laughter around him. Additionally, he was such a great host. Around him one was guaranteed to eat and drink well. Such a pure and super kind soul. Gone too soon. Him and all the rest beyond recall.

My girl cousin Melody, smart and beautiful, also had a very stubborn attitude about the fact that she was HIV positive and did not follow simple instructions from the health personnel. That obviously ended up costing her more than both her physical and mental health, but eventual death at a very tender age, leaving a toddler behind.

Of course, there are other family, friends and colleagues who are infected, but luckily, they have become accepting of their statuses and are taking all the precautions and following proper medical guidance. Hence, they are living normal lives; one cannot even suspect they are infected with HIV. Therefore, the simple lesson here is to get rid of the stigma, accept your status, and do the right thing, then you shall overcome.

Good people, HIV is not a death sentence, at least not with all the science and tools we have within our grasp.

Time and circumstances are long overdue that we spoke up openly and loudly with strong voices about HIV and AIDS. There should no longer be any shame given the advances and solutions at hand. Dialogues must be had around these issues that tend to cloud the testing, treatment and management of HIV and AIDS. These conversations would save a lot of strife and lives. I cannot speak with authority for other regions' traditions and cultures, but in Africa we still have a problem talking about sex and sex education to budding youth and teenagers. It's almost a taboo subject which creates a lot of pitfalls for the young generation. I would say in the case of my close and extended family this has clearly been one of the biggest missing pieces in the whole HIV puzzle.

With hindsight – which is always 20/20, I recognize that my cousins would have surely known and done better had they gotten the correct sex education and guidance at the right time. However, clearly our parents keep the topics on sex all under wraps. Not to mention that my own younger sister Naomi died of HIV and AIDS complications, but my mom would not even mention it until after the fact. I was a bit upset, because had they disclosed her status, I would have taken the necessary steps to get her the best advice; from counselling, to better nutrition and effective medicines. Obviously, there was a lot of shame and emotional trauma especially for my mother and siblings. At that age she left behind two sons who are still not clear about how their late mother died.

One aspect of HIV which I have always found baffling is that those who know they have tested positive can resort to behave rather recklessly. Maybe out of anger and a mixture of other emotions, they decide to knowingly and deliberately go out and have unprotected sex with the notion that 'they don't want to die alone'. Whereas others even go a step further and commit suicide. This is a very crisply clear demonstration of what a mental toll HIV can take on both the infected and affected in the absence of psychological support.

Unlike HIV/AIDS, because of the stigma and shame, people would be singing from the top of some roof and announce that their loved one has been diagnosed or died of cancer, heart disease, kidney failure – you name it. But in the case of HIV and AIDS it's always all hush hush. Don't we think and believe it is time to remove this continued stigma and then people's mental health would grossly improve naturally? I am of the conviction that it would make a sea of change of how we treat HIV and AIDS now and in the future. Interestingly in these times of COVID-19, people are not shy to admit they are positive and have even

gotten ill. The difference between these is a simple one as I noted earlier, the association of HIV with sexual relations.

Given all the above stories a few questions remain and need to be answered by one and all.

*What has worked that needs to be taken to scale?*

Counselling – before and after testing. This helps to prepare the individual for any outcome and eventually of how to handle their lifestyles depending on the test results. Needless to say there is always apprehension and trepidation as one awaits the results. If the outcome is negative, it is always a huge sigh of relief, but still advice on cautionary measures and behaviour is most important. On the other hand, if the outcome is a positive test, the first reaction is panic, denial, anxiety, and a sense of very deep fear as to what next; will I live? Will I die and after how long? Therefore, if as many people can test and know their status the better for themselves and society at large. Hence most countries are running massive campaigns to scale up testing, if only to fully understand the extent of the monster we are dealing with. This would prepare the health systems to better tailor their programmes and related support strategies accordingly.

*What failed us in the past in the fight against HIV/AIDS?*

Without doubt one of the major impediments towards tackling HIV and AIDS has been stigmatization. The stigma in a way would evolve into an unspoken lack of compassion and dignity especially for those infected. However, this stigma can also have a spill over effect to those affected equally, particularly the care takers.

Depending on the resource capacity (financial, material and human) in any given country, there could be serious shortages of the much-needed drugs, nutritious food baskets, nutrition supplements, and other social protection measures to support the families, much less the care aspects.

*How could we communicate better on this subject?*

Communication on HIV/AIDS has proven more difficult than any other disease. So, it is critical to open up the conversation space to share and disseminate the latest science that has proven efficient and effective in preventing and treating the conditions. From a literacy and language point of view it is important to make the information simple and accessible to all those infected and affected. Decipher the scientific babble and terminology. This means translating complex scientific concepts and materials into chewable morsels/terms using local languages and dialects as much as possible.

*How do we move forward especially in the times of COVID-19?*

Given the likelihood of underlying conditions including HIV more and rigorous testing and assessments are necessary. It would be extremely useful to create a better and enabling environment for information exchange across regions: South-South and North-South. Having a continued integrated approach to all aspects of HIV/AIDS management remains a priority. This would include tracking and reporting cases to ensure tailored treatments.

*What is the role of culture, traditional and indigenous knowledge systems, and treatments?*

The above aspects have somewhat been put on the back burner despite their potential to assist in the management of most conditions. That said, there is need to do more research and analysis on the traditional medicines to calibrate their content, quality, and dosages. Modern science and pharmaceuticals have been given centre stage at the expense and exclusion of traditional healers and cures, despite the huge biodiversity that we have in Africa and elsewhere. It is about time that

traditional healers are given the opportunity to apply their knowledge and negotiate these spaces of medicine to support modern innovations.

In the work that I have done in international nutrition globally, I have personally sought to volunteer my time to provide lectures, advise in the prevention, care, and treatment of HIV/AIDS to various communities. What has struck me the most and continually is how the world of being touched by HIV and AIDS can be extremely isolating and lonely. Yet it need not be if only we reset our attitudes towards more love, and listening with compassion.

### **Boitshepo Bibi Giyose Bio**



numerous international scientific technical and policy advisory committees.

Boitshepo Bibi Giyose is a Senior Nutrition Officer for Policy and Programmes in the Nutrition and Food Systems Division at the Food and Agriculture Organisation, but currently on secondment to the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) as special advisor to the CEO since January 2018. Her work focuses on integrating and mainstreaming nutrition into agriculture and related development agendas, and to promote a multisector approach for addressing all forms of malnutrition. She holds a MS in International Nutrition from Cornell University, NY and a BS in Nutrition and Dietetics from Appalachian State University, USA. Ms. Giyose was awarded a “Distinguished Alumna Award” in recognition of exceptional professional achievement by Appalachian State University in 2007. She was also named Senior Policy Scholar in 2011 by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation – USA - for her work on Home Grown School Feeding. She has served on

## Creating my Own Sunshine by Sunbeam

He said to me close your eyes and imagine a recent ML Mercedes Benz parked outside with all its wheels removed and it's supported by rocks. I did and the vision still clear, reassures me that walking away from that marriage was the best decision I ever made. Yes I had been given gupuro (divorce) by my then narcissistic husband who had stripped me off my economic standing. I was not working. I had had my third baby at 28 years in a seven year marriage. It was hard to explain to people how it had come to this because it's a story for another day.

My relatives were looking forward to a new independent me and they had their ideal expectations that this time I was going to be married to a doctor. Indeed men flooded into my life but I turned them all away. I was still heartbroken trying to pick up all the pieces of my life so that I begin my journey of self-discovery after seven years of living under the shadows of an abusive relationship. They say sometimes a good person can be sweet to others and be very stern with you. I realize now that I was my ex-husband's firstborn and that he was a father-figure instead of partner. I was co-dependent with him and I idolized him to such a point that I would reprimand myself using his voice and mannerisms. That was incredibly toxic. That disease of indecision, low self-esteem and the need of acknowledgement led me to what I have come to own... An unwanted friend!

Matthew I don't know if that was his real name because he just disappeared into thin air never to be seen again when I asked him to get tested. I had met him on a dating app my friend introduced me to. In my naiveté Matthew was a doctor (dream come true), a single father (we would relate with our blended family), he could sing (I am crazy about music and a musically expressive guy). Well we would talk until midnight and I got obsessed or was it love - I no longer now the difference. He wanted to marry me as soon as possible (ASAP) so that he would qualify for a job in the United States of America (USA). Everything, even the kids' transportation and documentation was already set aside. There was my knight in shining armour who was rescuing me from the claws of pain and heartbreak. I fell for him.

Well the calls became quick and abrupt! He no longer gave me the attention he gave me before and he would go for weeks without calling. Then one day he said he wanted to spend the day with me so that we could discuss the relocation issue. He had a zoom meeting with the guys in USA. Well I said to myself if I snooze I loose. I agreed. This was my first time meeting him. Yes judge me if you wish! He gave me the most wonderful day LOL. I never knew orgasms in my marriage. As a health professional I have always been keen on testing myself regularly and I did it that day absentmindedly. I didn't think this time it will be different. Well the lines definitely confirmed it. We did another test with a friend and for sure it came out positive. Of course a person will wonder that if I have been sexually active this much with so and so and protection was used or not. My naiveté of holding people to their word led to all this.

I trusted too much and I gave so much. What did I get in return? I was scared. I was shattered. I had failed my kids as my little one was still breastfeeding. I saw this as a punishment for the failed marriage. He told me I would fail without him and I would regret it as my life would be painful.

I broke down and cried. Why God, why didn't you give me a warning shot? Why I didn't even know that I was supposed to take Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PREP). Why wasn't I warned?

I resented God and everything life had to offer. I was depressed. I would cry a lot. But a friend advised me to see a doctor whom I knew very well. He was a good doctor and at our first appointment I walked out positive and thinking positive. The future looked positive if I was going to adhere.

I started treatment and the first few months I had issues with adherence. I would forget on one or two occasions because I hated pills. I mean even if I had a headache I would sleep it off because I hated taking pills. So I carried on. I started getting used to it until I one day realized I was turning yellow in the white part of my eyes. I went to see my GP and he said let's keep monitoring it. I started getting tired more often, swelling up the whole body. I was sore everywhere. When I did a liver function test the results looked deranged. I had an ultrasound scan and they could barely see my liver. The computerized tomography (CT) scan showed a shrunken liver. I immediately got admitted and was being monitored by specialist physicians. They put me on a drug holiday. I started recovering but still the liver function test results were high. I spent 3 months admitted on bed rest. I was put on another course of ARVs that was a bit gentle on my liver.

On discharge I felt like I had been reborn. Time to start all over again this time with a disease that scares me sometimes. I have always wanted to be blessed with the gift of life so that one day I would hold my grandkids. Hanzi zvirwere hazviuraye asi chouraya inguva. It's true. I pray for time. I pray for a future. As a single mom I am faced with a lot of challenges. But my children are my anchor. I have a mental health support group and a supportive partner.

If you and I are in the same boat we are each other's keeper. Protect your number 1. Think positive always. We have a long way to go.

To those who know or don't know the status of everyone beside you. Be careful of those reckless comments, those 'meaningless teases' are doing more harm than good. Be considerate of other people's feelings.

**Sunbeam Bio**

## **A Family Devastated by Mudiwa**

I first became aware of AIDS in 1997 when I was in the third form of High School. My abusive brother-in-law whom I hated so much became very sick, his hair became curly and he had shrunk to a skeletal state in short period of time. When he died I was in boarding school and my family didn't even tell me. It was almost as if no one wanted to talk about it. I would ponder to myself whether or not my sister had it or her two children. She met another man and had a baby during my last year of high school. I was so attached to the baby and he only wanted me to hold him. He got sick halfway through my year in high school and by the time I had finished writing my exams he died just before my birthday in the year 2000. I then watched my sister deteriorate in 2003, my heart broke in pieces. My oldest sister whom I had admired as a child for her fashion sense, love of reading and her intelligence, the first graduate in our family started talking like a baby and thinking like one, she was skeletal and only wanted to eat food cooked by me. When she died I lost my icon, sister, deputy parent and friend at once. I vowed I was not going to die from this dreaded disease which had taken my sister who was never promiscuous but married a virgin, yet had died of this sexually transmitted disease.

When my dad went into surgery for prostate cancer and developed bed sores which never healed and died in 2005 it didn't occur to me that he had died from HIV. He had gone into surgery for his prostate and then just deteriorated from there and later died from septic bed sores. Prior to going into surgery he had also developed Alzheimer's disease. Exactly a year later my mum developed meningitis and soon lost her sight and hearing and could no longer walk, she passed on exactly a year later and in the very same month that her husband had died. It is she, my Mum, who told me that my dad had contracted HIV from an affair and had seemed to lose hope when his mistress had died from an Aids related illness.

I hated this disease which had taken so many members from my family in such a short space and vowed that I would never die from it and do everything in my power to avoid getting infected. I was always careful and insisted on testing whenever I got into new relationships, for each slip up I would then make sure I knew where I stood. I accidentally got pregnant and had a little boy and remained a careful woman never really sleeping around but just in relationships. Then Covid-19 happened. I was so lonely, my daughter had visited my mom's sister in another province and there was no intercity travel so I was so depressed and lonely. I was really doing well in the industry of banking and was a now a sought out and paid speaker generally men in my network were intimidated by me. I remember saying this to a married guy friend of mine and he just laughed. So one day during Covid he told me that he wanted me to meet someone who was suitable for me and would not be intimidated by my success. We broke the Covid rules and a braai was hosted at a mutual friend's house. I met Tawanda and there were sparks, he was a quite the public figure and was active in politics. He told me the very first day we met that he was going to marry me and I fell for it, hook line and sinker. I was tired of being alone, doing so well in my career and not having a partner to celebrate with or just be there for me, I was tired of getting a suspicious eye from married women (both strangers and even family) whenever I showed up at gatherings dressed to the nines and flaunting my curves in a class way yet drawing every man's attention. I just wanted one man to desire and thirst for me. Right from the beginning I told Tawanda that we would have to get tested because I didn't want to contract HIV, having no parents I would not have someone to then take care of me because. He was always talking about how he wanted to have a baby and was constantly trying to get into my pants. Tawanda eventually managed to seduce me and there was no protection. In my heart I just looked at him and he looked healthy and I thought maybe if I get pregnant he will marry me swiftly. He later started withdrawing, after he had become evasive he had real big scandal on social media and a can of worms about his true character cracked open.

One comment in a group freaked me out where it was said he was known by young ladies at Chinhoyi University of Technology for wanting unprotected sex. I immediately blocked him and went to get tested.

I went to the doctor and he broke the news to me and I was shocked and angry. I went back to the office and carried on with my work after all - all I had was a career and it is what I used to drown my pain and loneliness. The next day I cried and cried and what hurts me whenever I recall this incident is that I cried that no one would want me, I was more concerned about being wanted than wanting and loving myself.

I started attending counselling and eventually started taking my meds in August, the paradox of life is that the day I started my treatment Tawanda announced to his following that he had prostate cancer. In a way I felt he deserved it. Later on I decided to send him a message telling him I had forgiven him and sent some money to help toward expenses. He died the very next morning after I sent the message. I went to pay my last respect and there was someone being addressed as a fiancée and she had been there all along, he had never been in love with me! There were other women posting him on their WhatsApp and social media statuses as well. I later reached out to the so called fiancée and told her to get tested and what she said broke me, they knew their statuses already and I guess Tawanda had just become reckless and had not adhered to his treatment and so had knowingly infected me.

So will I ever openly come out and share my story, never. I have suffered so much rejection my entire life and with the amount of stigma around the disease it would really be too much for me. I remain an anonymous healthy HIV carrier and wonder if I will ever find love or as insensitive people say find someone who is positive. Whatever happened to mutual attraction and emotionally, academically and physically compatible relationships? I am not dating. Last time I tried to date I insisted on testing because I wanted him to know and when he saw the test results he promised it wasn't an issue but he later ghosted me.

What pains me is the amount of stigma around. People who take their medication (meds) religiously are mocked so usually people stop taking their meds out of not wanting to be discovered and end up dying. I wish people knew that someone who is on Anti-retroviral therapy will have an undetectable viral load and therefore will not transmit the virus. Some people would rather sleep with someone who doesn't know their status than sleep with someone who knows and is adhering to their medication. So people are afraid to get tested because they don't want to know the results and those tested are afraid to openly take their meds so they end up defaulting.

### **Mudiwa Bio**

Mudiwa is a beautiful media professional living positively.

## **Left between the Jaws of a Lion translated by Daniel Garwe written by Wellington David**



Hello Wadzanai, how are you?

My name is Wellington and I am 21 years old. I am the first child, and was born with the virus - HIV. I was always sickly since birth. By the age of ten months, I had almost died from AIDS on several occasions.

As soon as my father thought I was HIV positive, he ran away from home and left my mother suffering with me alone. My father and mother were both young, it was scary how they would deal with an infected child. Lacking experience, he did not have to worry about leaving the family to wander around the world. Many men and women, all over the world, regardless of age, cannot stand to argue or fight against the virus that has entered the family. What makes people so afraid is their lack of knowledge.

It was only in 2007 that the truth became clear that I was HIV positive after I became seriously ill and had a blood test. The God of heaven intervened and I did not die, but I was left paralyzed as my legs were completely weak and could not move. By this time I was eleven years old. Years had passed since I was in 5th grade. I had had a blood test but the disease was not detectable.

I was then introduced to a plan to take antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) into my body. “Murombo haarove chine nguwo” (once one is poor one remains poor as one never get opportunities to make it). As I was taking the pills (first line), my body immediately reacted to the medication which became a painful challenge as it threatened my young life. I fell into a coma and became very ill. The medication was stopped and the second line of medication was introduced to see if it would be compatible with my body.

It was also repelled by my body. I was so sick, frail and bedridden. Having to stop taking the pills again was useless. So, I had no option but to struggle with the therapy and the pain.

I have always worried about what I'm going to be like in life; the thoughts and feelings that have plagued me with the issue of refusing to accept that I was living a life of taking pills every day. Things that are not easy to accept. I kept wondering why other kids my age did not have the same problem as I did. They were playing hide and seek outside, yet here I was, groaning with sickness, and crawling on all fours unable to walk upright.

My mind was racing and I almost felt like I was in a trance. I was depressed. It was overwhelming. Another thought was that it would ruin my life as a teenager. Another idea was, 'How far do I go in this process, and with what result?' At times, I used to say that I didn't want to take the pills anymore, but I would just see my mother come in so brave and encouraging and I would throw away the idea of failure. The slowness of accepting what you are and accepting what you have and looking for a solution is what really made my mind wander with despair. I was heavily in denial.

In the year 2008 when our country's economy was struggling in hyperinflationary conditions. Rampant food shortages led to my contracting tuberculosis (TB). I survived the ordeal because I got lucky as it got detected early and I had to undergo treatment. Within two months of my illness, I was feeling much better, and I finally recovered.

I ended up hitting puberty at 15 with no report of exactly what I was taking, or for what reason.

I used to ask what my fault was that I always took these pills every day. Was it the same out there, that teenagers take pills to survive? It continuously boggled my mind.

It made me hate my parent and blame her and say: what kind a mother infects a child with this horrible disease?

When I look at it today I see that I was actually in denial, which led me to a point of depression to the effect that one doesn't care about one's life.



I was lucky enough to meet a friend I grew up with in the community who also received ART pills. My colleague had accepted the congenital condition, and that gave me the opportunity to gradually slip out of denial, and start enjoying life. I started to live with hope.

A miraculous turning point was later cemented as I met Sister Usavi of Chipadze Clinic, in Bindura. This nurse became my lifeguard, my friend, and became my wise counsellor and aunt as well.

She gave me a vision that clarified what living with HIV means.

That's when I really started to think seriously, and I began to see myself as a person.

The teachings I received about living with hope made me more committed to the people because I always wrapped myself in my own cocoon. To make oneself a lone ranger, a man without friends or buddies, a man who plays alone. A very lonely character.

After being counselled, I was introduced to other groups of people who were just like me. I then had the opportunity to attend a Peer Educators Training Workshop. It trained those living with HIV to be mentors to vulnerable people with whom we associate in living with HIV. We have learned to encourage others to accept and live a life of hope, health and happiness.

I also began to apply what I had learned to myself and to others. Today I am a real peer educator, in shaping the lives of those who have failed to accept it. I have been given a group of children living with HIV whom I encourage to continue taking the pills, giving them hope for a brighter future.

The accusation and the outrage, which I held against my mother and the accusation of her infecting me with HIV ended with this teaching.

As a Christian I immediately began to pray to God to give me direction and strength in my painful journey, especially in the matter of not giving up second-line pills.

Although relatives and friends shunned me as they were disgusted by my sickly state, and other reasons including my crippled legs and my poverty.

I have always stood by my God to overcome the prejudices that swarm me like bees.

God really did intervene and I gradually became more and more accepted. I would especially like to thank the girls who live close to the telecommunications network booster in our neighbourhood. They were the first to treat me with dignity and respect. They accepted me as one of their own friends, without any form of stigma or discrimination.

People began to treat me as a fellow citizen. Speaking of which I have made so many friends now. I'm more like a celebrity as I turned the tides on the haters and now they like me. It all started with my dear lady friends I mentioned above.



I vowed that I would never stop taking my medication for the rest of my life. God is my pillar of strength, it will be alright.

Looking closely at my life, it is still a struggle. I look back at how I grew up, since I was ten months old, when I was abandoned by my father. I believe that my body's immune system was so weakened by the virus that AIDS actually attacked me due to lack of antiretroviral therapy. Prevention is better than cure, so most children like me deserve better. This was also due to the low CD4 count and high Viral Load. I just seem more like a cat with nine lives.

My mother was young when she was left with a burden too enormous for her age. She was naive and could not even imagine a man running away from her, leaving a sick child behind. It was not easy to fathom.

In addition, Mother, as an infected person, was also diagnosed with cancer of the leg which put her soul and body down and very low. It was a case of a woman with a dilemma. How could she carry her physically challenged son with a painful leg?

The son was no longer able to walk on his own because of a debilitating disease in his legs.

A case similar to an old frog expected to leap as a way to move around. The African proverb about the frog is that a frog moves around through leaps and jumps. No matter what its age the frog is expected to leap or jump as its basic reflex. Wellington's mother was struggling to carry Wellington on her back as he grows. She has to struggle to hustle and make a living daily. Then she is diagnosed with cancer on her leg.

She has a double burden of carrying her her son and hustling to make a living regardless of her painful leg. Wellington remains dependent on her. So she has to disregard the pain and like an old frog if danger comes she has to leap into the water for safety.

My mother was devastated when she constantly saw that her son had become a weakling. In fact, I was so sick sometimes that she would often fail to find sleep afraid to leave my side, in case she would wake up to a dead corpse. What would her in-laws say?

I have never seen a woman as brave as my mother. Her courage caused me to live to where I am today. Consistently she would be by my side, at times I would find her in a state I would suspect that she had quickly wiped her tears, to protect my feelings.

As you see worshipping God or being spiritual is a good thing, I have benefited immensely from it. I got protection from peer pressure through Christian teachings and principles.

If I had not stood by God so to speak, I would probably not be here on earth. God became my closest ally. Youth is a normal part of life, but if you do not play it well, you are in for a rude awakening.

I missed out on drugs, smoking, engaging in promiscuous activities in beerhalls, and getting sexually transmitted infections. Many young people fall victim to peer pressure. I avoided bad morals because of prayer and faith in God. I never found myself falling into the hands of bad friends.

#### TB Infection and treatment

ART specialists know that healthy food is needed. I finally found an easy way to talk about taking my pills. As you know it is not easy to say it out in public, that I am on ARVs. So I coined the nickname 'Kujusa' - meaning 'Airtime topup'!

If there are guests in the house noone will understand what I mean using that statement. It made my life easy and I was able to take the pills every day on time.

TB then came along and I was found recharging “Easy Call” and “Buddie” airtime (two different mobile operators as a proxy for the ARVs and TB medication) in the same mouth.

Another challenge my mother and I faced was getting enough nutrition. This is one of the reasons why taking pills can be very stressful, if you do not have enough food you can cause damage to your stomach or other internal organs.

In some instances, food was completely lacking. My mother worked hard for our well-being. She pretended not to be in pain, but I could see her limping sometimes. On the worst days she would take a rest.

Although we sometimes starve due to lack of food, I have no choice but to take the medication. I suffer from anxiety often about taking pills without eating because I experience the side effects. The stress I end up experiencing at times weighs me down. I only take the ARVs even though they have conditions which I fail to meet because I've been through so many near death experiences. I don't want to die from defaulting. It is better to die from hunger.



A lot of the advice and motivation to remain committed to the ART program comes from my Mother. I am forever grateful.

Our community is full of ignorance about HIV or AIDS. For me to endure the stigma, discrimination and hostility, is because of the love my mother showed me. She stood by me and her love taught many observers from a distance.

This is a true love story of a mother's love for her son. I believe that with the writing of this story, it will be a lesson in different countries. The number of academics to draw a leaf, will be multiplied a thousand times more.

It is my fervent hope that one day the story will have a regional or even global influence. This will see to it that this world does not discriminate against people like me who are living with HIV/AIDS. Such inhumane actions by any society, will lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS as people will hide and not disclose their statuses. The infected will not go out freely to get help through ART.

My father was worried about how having a child like me would reflect on him. Yes I was only 10 months old but I had almost died of a number of illnesses. I was the firstborn so both parents were new to raising an infected baby. But then the head of the house ran away and said he was exhausted.

Why would they believe they were the ones who brought me to earth?

It is not easy to keep an infected baby yes, but I also pray that my dad and other fathers to be patient. Seek help and accurate information about HIV, the transmission between parents and the unborn child. It is true that a father can transmit HIV to his unborn child. Many just look to mom, but I don't.

A man can infect his wife. The infection can cause a woman to miscarry, or the child can be infected during the birth process – mother to child infection.

If they are married or planning to have children know that it is the child's right to be protected from the virus while he or she is still in the mother's womb.

It is not easy to keep an infected baby yes, but I also pray that my Father and others have a Father or caregivers for babies to be patient. Seek help with accurate information about HIV, the transmission between parents and the unborn child. It is true that a father can transmit HIV to his unborn child. Many just look at Mom, but I don't.

The virus will already be in your system. The nine months of pregnancy are not when one gets the virus. Mother to child transmission can also take place if the couple do not have a blood test during the

pregnancy. To those who are dating or those planning to have children please get tested and protect your unborn child.



See what happened after my father ran away from our family. One cannot run away from the virus once it is within. My father remarried and with his new wife he was able to give birth to a child who was HIV negative because they took the appropriate precautions. This was a happy outcome for my younger brother as adequate precautions were taken to ensure that my father did not have to run away from him. If we look at the two reactions we can see that there are some definite contrasts.

As a result, it is clear that children or people living with HIV are more likely to be socially disadvantaged than what I have seen at birth.

Some people hate you because you are disabled. Many people in the world shun children or relatives because of their real poverty.

So I have seen all three scenarios, being shunned because I am poor, being left out and marginalized by friends because of my disability and I am stigmatized because I was born with the virus.

Do not look down on anyone, my brothers and sisters. Twenty years have passed since I was born. Here I am still living. I could live to 100 – who knows?

If you want to look at people living with HIV they are really smart. Some are even stronger than those without HIV.

I remember one day I met a girl, and I was just walking. She ran towards me happily, but the confusion showed on my face. She realized that Brother Welly was lost. She then told me with tears in her eyes: "I was the sick girl refusing to take ARVs. Your training and encouragement has led to this. I am stronger now!"

Of course, I did not recognize her at all, so she told me where she lived. Where she lives is on my way to church.

That's what ARV pills do when you take them and follow the instructions of your healthcare providers. The girl I mentioned was on her deathbed when I first saw her. She was extremely ill and could have been blown away by a gust of wind as she was refusing to take her ARVs. She thanked me for bringing her back from the jaws of death. I told her to thank God and not I!

## **Wellington Bio**

Wellington David is a peer counsellor for people living with HIV. He works with young children.



## Kusiwa Mukanwa meShumba na Wellington David



Mhoro Wadzanai, wakadii hako?

Zita rangu ndinonzi Wellington ndine makore makumi maviri nerimwe (21) ekuberekwa, ndaka berekwa ndiri dangwe, ndiine utachiwana hwe HIV. Ndaive ndonda ndichingorwara rwara, ndakasvitsa mwedzi gumi yekuzvarwa, ndichingopotsa rufu neurwere ihwohwo.

Baba vangu pavakango fungidzira kuti ndine chirwere vakabva vatotiza pamba ndokusiya Amai vangu vachitambura neni vari vega. Baba vangu nehudiki hwavaive nahwo, zvakava tyisa kuti vaizoita sei nemwana ane utachiwana. Nekushaya ruzivo, hazvina kuvanetsa kuti vangosiya mhuri yacho, vatetereke havo nenyika. Vakawanda vanhurume kana vanhukadzi zvakare, pasi rose zvisinei kuti ndezvera ripi vasingagone kumira kuti vataturane kana kurwisana neutachiwana hwapinda mumhuri. Chino nyanyoita kuti vanhu vatye kudaro, kushaya ruzivo rwakakwana.

Mugore ra 2007 ndipo pakazobuda chokwadi chekuti zvedi ndaive neHIV mushure mekunge ndarwara zvakaipisisa ndokuvhenekwa ropa.

Mwari vari kudenga vakapindira handina kuzofa, asi ndakazosara ndaremara sezvo makumbo angu akange asisina simba napaduku pose uye ndisisagone kufamba. Apa ndaive ndave nemakore gumi nerimwe chete (13).

Makore aive adarika kubva ndiri grade 5, ndakange ndambotorwa Ropa asi chirwere chaisabatika.

Ndakabva ndapinzwa pachirongwa chekumwa mapiritsi ekudzivirira kuwanda kweutachiwana mumuviri mangu. Murombo haarovi chinenguwo, ndakati ndichipinda pakumwa mapiritsi kudaro, muviri wangu wakabva waramba kugamuchira mushonga zvinove zvinorwadza uye kurwarisa. Ndakapinda panhovo yorufu neurwere ndikayaura kusvika ndazomiswa ndokutsvagirwa mamwe ma piritsi kuti vaone kana aizo wirirana nemuviri wangu.

Weduwee, wenguwo dze uswa ndewe nguwo dze uswa. Mapiritsi emushonga wepiri pachirongwa che ART (Anti Retroviral Therapy) akatadza zvekare kuwirirana nemuviri wangu. Vanhu wee ndakarwara zvekuti ndakakange ndangosara musoro bedzi. Kutu ndichiregedza kumwa mapiritsi zvakare ndakaona zvisina chimuko. Ndokushingirirana nawo mumarwadzo imomo.

Ndiri pakushushikana kuti ndichazoveyi muhupenyu, pfungwa ne ndangariro dzakandi wandira nenyaya yekuramba kugashira kuti ndaive ndave kurarama hupenyu hweku kabira mapiritsi zuva nezuva. Zvinhu zvisiri nyore kugashira. Ndairamba ndichi zvizvunza kuti ko sei vamwe vana vezera rangu vasinawo dambudziko rakafanana nerangu. Vaiswero tamba nekupfichuka nemaraini in ndichi gomera neurwere, nekugweshwa.

Pfungwa dzangu dzaka gomberwa ndokubva ndatomboita sendagumirwa nepfungwa (Depression). Zvakanga zvandimomoterwa. Imwe ndangariro yaiti ndikokuparara kwehupenyu hwangu ndichiri chanana. Imwe pfungwa yoti saka ndosvikepi ndiri pachirongwa, uye zvichaguma nepi? Pamwe pachu ndaimbo fuma ndichitoti handichadi kumwa zvimapiritsi zvacho, asi ndaizongoona Amai vangu vauya vachindi

shingisa ndobva ndarasira kumararo pfungwa yekukundikana. Iko kunonoka kugashira zvauro nekutambira zvavepo wotsvaga gwinyiso ndiko kwaitonyanya kuti pfungwa dzangu dzitenderere nekepererwa.

Mugore ra 2008 apo nyika yedu yaitambura neku misikidza upfumi hwayo zvinhu zvichinetsa mukurama. Zvekudya zvichishaikwa munyika iniwo ndipo pandakabva ndabatwa nechirwere cheRurindi(Tuberculosis-TB). Ndakapona nepaburi retsono nekuda kwekuti chirwere cheRurindi chaive pandiri chaka kurumidza kubatwa ndokubva ndatopinda pachirongwa chekurapwa. Mumwedzi miviri yekurwara ndakawanikwa ndave kutoita zviri nani, ndokuzopora.



Ndakazo sara ndosvika paku putudza(makore gumi nemashanu-15) ndisina kana mushumo wekuti chaizvo izvo mazipiritsi aya ndirikuma nwirei?

Ndaizvi vhunza kuti mhosva yangu ndeyei kuti ndigare ndichimwa mazi piritsi zuva nezuva.

Zvakaita kuti ndinzwe kuvenga Mubereki wangu ndichi mupa mhosva ndichiti: \_ndi Amai verudzii vanopomera Mwana chirwere chino shungurudza zvakadai\_ Ndikazvitarisa nhasi ndinoona kuti ndiko kwaitove kurwara kwacho kusvika pakuwora mwoyo zvekuto shaya hanya nehupenyu(Depression).

Ndaka zoita rombo rakanaka ndika sanganiswa neshamwari yandaka kura nayo munharaunda achitambirawo mapiritsi ake. Iye akanga azvi gamuchira kuti ndizvo zviripo zvakandipa kutanga kufarira upenyu. Uye kurarama neka tariro.

Ndakati gare gare ndokubva sanganiswa zvakare naMukoti Usavi vepa Chipadze Clinic makare muBindura. Mukoti uyu akave muraramisi wangu, akave shamwari yangu, akave vaTete vangu zvese nekuva Sekuru vangu.

Vakandipa muono wakandi jekesera chinonzi kurarama neutachiwana.

Ndipo pandaka vhurika pfungwa ndikatanga kutozvionawo semunhu.

Dzidziso yandakawana pamusoro pekurarama netariro yakaita kuti ndichizvipawo kuvanhu nekuti ndaingogara ndakazviputira mubutiro rangu ndega. Kuzviita Chigwindiri zimunhu risina hama rinotamba roga.

Mushure meku rapwa ndangariro dzisina maturo, neku pihwa dzidziso yeupenyu ndakatanga kuchiratidzwawo mamwe mapoka evanhu vakafanana neni pakurarama. Ndakazoita mukana wekuenda kumusangano(Peer Educators Training Workshop). Kwai dzidziswa vanorarama neutachiwana kuti vazo vewo varairidzi kuvanhu vano shungurudzika vatino fambidzana navo mukurarama neutachiwana. Takadzidza kukurudzira vamwe kuti vazvigashire vararame upenyu une tariro, hutano ne mufaro.

Ndakazo tangawo kushandisa zvandaive ndadzidza pandiri uye nekukurudzira vamwe. Pari nhasi ndatove mudzidzisi(Peer educator) chamangwiza chaiye, pakuumbiridza upenyu hwevano tadza kuzvi gamuchira. Ndave kutopihwa boka revana vanorarama neutachiwana ndichivakurudzira kuramba vachimwa mapiritsi, neku vapa tariro yekuita ramangwana raka jeka.



Kakupomera nekakushatirirwa, kandai ita Amai vangu ndichivapa mhosva yekunditapurira HIV kakabva kaperu kuburikidza nedzidziso iyoyi.

Semu Kristu ndakabva ndatanga kunamata kunaMwari kuti vandipe gwara negwinyiso murwendo rwunorwadza rwandaifamba, kunyanya panyaya yekuti ndisa regedze umwa mapiritsi echikamu chepiri(second line).

Nyangwe hazvo hama neshamwari dzakambenge dzambo ndisema nezvikonzero zvai sanganisira; ku rwara rwara, kuremara makumbo be hurombo.

Ndaka ramba ndamira panaMwari wangu bedzi kuti ndikunde rusarura rwaindi momotera se nyuchi dzegonera.

Mwari vakapindira zvechokwadi ndikaona zvizhoma nezvizhoma ndave kuonekwawo semunhu. Ndino nyanyo tenda vasikana vanogara pa dhuze neMichina inokanda masaisai embozhanhare, kana kuti (Network Booster nechirungu).

Vanhu vakazotanga kundionawo semunhu, ndikaona shamwari dzotowedzera. Kutaura kuno ndave neshamwari dzakawanda kwazvo. Ndave kuto gamushirwawo sezvandiri.

Ndaka tsidza kuti handifi ndakarega kumwa mishonga yangu upenyu hwangu geese. Mwari ari mubatsiri wangu, zvichanaka chete.

Tikazvi tarisa pari zvino, upenyu hwangu huchakango woma. Ndika tarisa kwanda kabva, nemakuriro andakaita, kubvira ndiine mwedzi gumi yeku berekwa, pandaka siiwa naBaba vangu. Ndinodaira kuti masoja emumuviri mangu aive achikurirwa neutachiwana zvekuti AIDS yaibva yatofaranuka hayo nekuda kwekusave pachirongwa chekumwa mushonga wekushometsa utachiwana hwe HIV. Izvi zvaikonzerwawo nekusa batika nyore kwaiita utachiwana kuti zvizivikanwe kuti hwakawanda zvakadii(CD4 -Count plus Viral Load).

Ndakazongove munhu wekugara ndichiita se muti uya unonzi Mufa-ndichimuka.

Amai vangu vakasiwa nemutoro waive wakakurisa pazera ravo. Vaive vachiri mudzimai wechidiki zvekuti vaisazvi gonawo, kuti murume atiza, iwewe wasiwa nemwana ndonda. Zvaisave nyore.

Pamusoro paizvozvo Amai, semunhu airarama neutachiwana vakabva vabatwawo neGomarara repagumbo zvikava dzorera mweya nenyama yavo pasi pasi. Zvakange zvazoipisisa pakuti \_Mai vatsva kumusana Mwana atsva padumbu\_.

Vaizo takura mwanakomana wavo sei negumbo rinorwadza?

Mwanakomana aive asingacha gone kuzvi fambira ega nekuda kweurwere hwavhiringa tsinga dzemakumbo ake. Zvikuru kudyungu muchembere we Datya. Kuti iro rachembera asi kufamba kwaro, kusvetuka svetuka. Zvino chembere inosvetuka ikasvikepi makazvi tarisawo?

Amai vangu vakatombo rasa tariro vaakuona gomba reMwana wavo rakava tarisa nemaziso matsvuku. Pakuti ndairwara zvakaipisisa zvekuti pamwe vairara vakasvinura vakabatira ura mumawoko kuri kutya kuti Mwana wevaridzi chichafuma chiri chando. Handisati ndaona munhu wechidzimai akashinga sa Amai vangu. Kushinga kwavo kwakaita kuti ndirarame kusvika pandiri nhasi.

Zvamunoona kunamata chinhu chakanaka, inini ndakabatsirika nekudzivirirwa kubva kuvafuriri.

Daindisina kunge ndakamira pana Mwari kutaura kuno ndingadai pamwe ndisisipo panyika. Upwere hunodiwa nemunhu wese, asi ukasatamba hudiki kwako zvakanaka, unopinda muna taisireva.

Ndakapotswa nezvinodhaka, zvinosvutwa, kuita kahunhu kekuda mafaro zvakanyanyisa zvekuto swera mumabhawa, wanike wazobata zvirwere zveNjovhera kana zvimwewo zvepabonde. Zvinowira vechidiki zvizhinji zvinobva mukufurirana(peer pressure). Yakandinzvenga nekuda kwekunamata nekutenda munaMwari ndokuwanikwa ndichinzvengeswa kuwira mumaoko eshamwari dzakaipa.



## TB Infection and treatment

Vanoziva kujusa(ART) vanoziya kuti panoda chikafu chisvinu.

Ndakapedzesera ndawana nzira yakareruka yekutaura pamusoro pekumwa mapiritsi angu. Sezvamuno ziva haisi nyore kutaura pazere vanhu kuti ndinomwa maARV. Saka ndakagadzira kazita kemadunhurirwa kekuti \_'Kujusa' kana kuti 'ndipei airtime yangu ndijuse'\_

Kana mumba muine vayenzi hapana anozonzwisisa kuti ndirikureva kuti ndave kunomwa ma piritsi angu. Zvaibva zvandipa manyukunyuku ekuti ndifarire kuramba ndichimwa mapiritsi acho zuva rega rega nenguva.

Rurindi (TB) rwakabva rwauiyayo mudhuze wanike ndave kujusa Easy Call ne Buddie pamuromo mumwechete.

Imwe nhamo yedu naAmai vangu yaive yekuwana chikafu chinovaka muviri chakatiringana. Ndizozvimwe zvinoita kuti kumwa mapiritsi kushungurudze, nekuti ukashaya chikafu unogona kutozo kanganisika mudumbu kana dzimwe nhengo dzemukati.

Dzimwe dzenguva. chikafu chaishaikwa zvachose. Amai vangu vaishingairira kuti tirarame zvakaoma kudaro. Vaiti kana vasiri pakurwadziwa negumbo ravo votsvaga tsvaga zvingati raramise, kanawo musiyogumbo rarwadza vombozorora.

Nyangwe zvazvo tichitombo rara nenzara kuburikidza neku shaikwa kwechikafu, handina zvandino gona kuita, kunze kwekunwa mapiritsi. Zveku zombotyira kuti mapiritsi haamwiwe usina chawadya hauzvifunge nekuda kwe nhamo yamunenge maka tarisana nayo panguva iyoyo. Ndino tongonwa mapiritsi nyangwe zvitsvuke kunge ropa. Nekuti ndaka potswa nerufu kakawanda kwazvo, saka handidi kufa nekuda kweku sanwa mapiritsi. Zviri nani kufa nenzara.

Kurudziro zhinji yekusabva pachirongwa chemapiritsi ndaiwana kubva kuna Amai vangu. Ndino vatenda zvikuru nekusingapere.

Nharaunda yatigere izere kusaziva kwakanyanya zvizere nezve HIV kana AIDS. Kusemwa nevanhu ikoko kwaipombodza nemazirudo andairatidzwa naAmai vangu. Vaimira neni, uye rudo rwemubereki wangu rwakadzidzisa vakawanda vaiona vari nechekure. Dzinde ravo rerudo ndinodaira kuti nekunyorwa kurikuita iyoyi nyaya, rwuchave dzidziso kunyika dzakasiyana siyana. Nehuwandu hwevachadzidza huchapetwa kano kwana churu chinoraudzira.

Ishuviro yangu kuti tive ne matunhu nematunhu pasi rese asinga sarudze vanhu vakaita seni vanorarama neutachiwana hweHIV, hunova huchizo konzeresa chirwere che Shuramatongo che AIDS.



Baba vangu hongu vaive vavhunduka kuti zvino Mwana akaita seni vaizoita sei naye?

Hongu ndaingove nemwedzi gumi bedzi asi ndaive ndapotsa kufa nekurwara kakawandisa.

Ndaive Dangwe saka vabereki vese vaive vatsva pakurera kacheche kane utachiwana. Asi musoro wemba ndiwo wakabva watiza ukati ndapererwa.

Ko vaigotizei ivo variivo vandiunza panyika?

Hazvisi nyore kuchengeta kacheche kane utachiwana hongu, asi ndinongo namatawo kuti vangu Baba nevamwe ana Baba kana variritiri vetusvava vaite mwoyo mirefu. Votsvaga rubatsiro nezivo yaka kwana nezve Mukondombera, kutapurirana kunoitwa pakati pevabereki nemwana asati azvarwa. Ichokwadi kuti Baba vanogona kutapurira Mwana asati azvarwa utachiwana hwe HIV. Vazhinji vanongo tarisa kuna Amai, asi sandizvo.

Mwedzi mipfumbamwe yakawandisa kwazvo kuti munhurume atapurirwe utachiwana iye agozo tapurirawo mudzimai wake anenge agara akazvitakura. Mudzimai uya anogona kuzo zadzawo mwana asati azvarwa kana vakasano torwa ropa vaine nhumbu pavano nyoresa pamuviri.

Vari muwanano kana kuti vari kuronga kuita vana zvizivei kuti ikodzero yemwana kudzivirirwa kubva kuUtachiwana huri kuvabereki paanenge achiri mudumbu raAmai.

Ndombo tarisa kuti ko Baba zvavakatiza chii chakazoitika?

HIV haitizwe kana yapinda mauri inogaramo. Baba vangu vakazo roorazve mumwe mudzimai ndoku komborerwa neumwe mwana mukomana uyo asina kuzozvarwa neUtachiwana.

Zvakaita zvakanaka kwazvo pakuti Minin'ina wangu anodiwa naBaba. Izvi zvinhu zviri pachena, sezvo vasina kuzomutiza. Tika cherechedza nyaya iyi ino buritsa kuti rusarura rwuripo mukurarama. Munin'ina wangu wekwa Mainini uyu, aka zvarwa asina HIV nekuda kwe kutorwa kwakaitwa matanho ekumu dzivirira achiri mudumbu raAmai.

Ndizvo zvabva zvabudisa pachena kuti vana kana kuti vanhu vano rarama neUtachiwana vano semwa zvakananyanya munharaunda matigere kubirikidza nezvandakaona pana Baba vekubereka.

Vamwe vanhu vanokusema nekuti waremara vanhu vazhinji munyika vano sarudza vana kana hama nekuda kwehurombo chaiho.

Saka ini ndakazviona zvese zviri zvitatu, kusaonekwa semunhu nekuda kwehurombo hwangu, ndikazosiiwa pachena neshamwari nekuda kwekuremara pamusoro pazvo ndokusemewa nekuda kwekuve ndaka zvarwa neUtachiwana.

Munhu munhu hama dzangu usamutarisire pasi kana kumusema nezvaari. Makore makumimaviri ave kutokwana ndiri mupenyu wani. Apa ndichiri kutoenderera mberi nekurarama. Zvichida ndotosvitsa zana ramakore, ndiani angazive?.

Ukada kutarisisa vanhu vari kurarama nehutachiwana zvivhindikiti chaizvo.

Vamwe vakato simba kupfuura vasina HIV.

Zvandi rangaridza rimwe zuva ndakasangana nemumwe musikana, ndichi zvfambirawo hangu. Akandi mhanyira nemufaro, asi chiso chake chaka ramba kudzoka mundangariro dzangu. Iye akazviona kuti Mukoma Welly varasika. Akazondiudza nemisodzi pamatama akati: "Ndini kandonda kaya kamaka batsira nedzidziso uye kurudziro yekumwa mapiritsi. Ndasimba hamuchandi ziva kaa!"

Chokwadi ndakanga ndatomushaya zvachose, akatozo ndiudza kumaraini kwaigara ndipo pandakazoti bengenu. Kwaanogara ndiyo nzira yangu yeku Kereke.

Ndizvo zvinoita mapiritsi ema ARV ukanwa uchitevedzera zvawakaudzwa nevehutano, unoto dzoka kuita chivhindikiti. Musikana wandareva pandakamuona pekutanga achirwara nekusada kumwa mapiritsi aive pa nhovo yerufu chaipo, aito gonna kupeperetswa nemhepo. Asi hoyo atove zigadzi, mutsika panotinhira chaiye.

Akapa kutenda kwazvo achiti ndimi makandi dzosa kubva kuvakafa, pandakanga ndamborega zvekumwa mapiritsi, nekurudziro yenyu, ndikamuti, kwete! sandini, ngatitende Mwari.



## Who will love my children by Ellen P. Jordan

I am almost sure I know the exact time I contracted the HIV virus. I had been in a short marriage that had ended before my son's 1st birthday. I was alone and I worried about the future. I had a good job and so financially, I was ok. However, I worried about my son being an only child, never having a sibling of his own. I consciously made a decision to have another child. I had moved out of the capital to work in another city at one of our branches, my partner lived in the capital but his job required him to travel extensively and so regularly, he would visit me and spend a few days. The day I realised I must have contracted the virus I remember experiencing terrible night sweats. I knew something was not right. I had a friend Sharon who had recently gone for an HIV test and had tested positive. It was a real blow to her and it was at a time when HIV was still a huge taboo. The symptoms that had pushed her to go for a test were the same symptoms I was feeling but I was not ready to face the reality of it all. I was never good with taking pills so I chose to ignore it.

I fell pregnant early in our relationship. Condoms were never even a part of the conversation. A few months after becoming pregnant, I was promoted back to head office. I had my baby late one night after my gynaecologist realised my baby was in distress and I required an emergency Caesarean section. I was transferred to a hospital that had a theatre and my daughter was delivered. In those days, they did not check for HIV during pregnancy.

I always worried about the HIV status of my daughter especially after I tested positive. Her father had since succumbed to the disease. It always hurt me - what if she had contracted the disease from me while in the womb. I could not say to her "can we go for an HIV test?" The question in her mind would have been why and for what reason, but in reality I was not ready to face the outcome. I could not tell anyone. A few years later however, while on a visit to my aunt, my mother's young sister, they were tested for HIV. My aunt at the time was a rural nurse, they were having an HIV awareness drive, and she tested all the children who were at the homestead. I was furious with my aunt for testing my children without my consent but I could not voice my displeasure. In our culture, your mum's sister is your mother so perhaps she felt she had the right to test them without my consent. My only consolation was that both children tested negative.

In my new job at head office, the company started a major HIV awareness drive and I was tasked to lead that drive working with a local NGO. It was an extensive campaign and we travelled countrywide talking about the need for testing, symptoms and how to manage HIV. A few others and I became peer educators for the company. The pictures we shared during the campaign of diseases that came because of contracting HIV that later developed to AIDs were horrific. In addition, we demonstrated and advocated the use of male and female condoms. I learnt a lot during those tours but I remained un-tested while advocating for others to know their status. I am not sure if I was in denial or what. Eventually after we finished our tours, I decided to go to the NGO's clinic for testing and my result was positive. I was not shocked but it was still painful getting the diagnosis. In those days they did not offer ARV's immediately, you had a choice. The only person I told was my friend Sharon who had tested positive years earlier and had since moved to London. She was my only confidant I never told another soul.

A few months after my diagnosis I was in Seychelles for a combined HIV and Human Resources (HR) conference. As the facilitator spoke about the ravages of HIV, I could no longer hold back my tears. The tears just fell down my face. I tried to hide it but I was broken. HIV can be a very lonely disease and that is why more understanding is needed. The reality had hit me. I knew even then that HIV was not a death sentence but still that did not stop me thinking about the possibility of losing this battle to AIDS. My children were still young 6 and 3 years old respectively and the question on my mind was: *should I die,*

*who would love my children?* For my infant daughter I was her only parent as her father had succumbed to the virus that year. A year later, I took a voluntary retrenchment package from my company and travelled with my children to London, where all my family were including my mother and my friend Sharon resided. My thinking was honestly, that if I died my children would have someone with them. I have a friend who died at home in the arms of her son. Her children did not know her status and only learned of it after their mother's death. My friend told me once she had stopped taking ARV's because they made her ill. She later tried to resume taking the pills but it was too late and she lost her battle to the Virus. Leaving behind children lost and confused and in a foreign country. I had to step up because what I had feared would happen to me - had happened to my friend. Even though her children were in their teens they still needed a mother's love and guidance. I stood in the gap as best as I could but I realised that this is the reality of AIDS - it ravages families and leaves aged grandparents with young children to bring up, and many child headed households. There is no need to succumb to this virus especially currently. Get tested, know your status and if positive get on ARV's and take them religiously! There are people who love you and need you. Make a decision to live and live positively.

London turned out to be not as lucrative as I thought it would be. I got a good job but failed to get a work permit. Having the children with me did not help much because they needed constant care. It was at this time that I developed insomnia. I was so stressed. I would be up the whole night playing the game "snake" on my phone. I could not tell my mum or my siblings. In fact, my mother died years later never knowing my status. Today my siblings still do not know. I decided to go back home where I could manage better but I had constant headaches thinking about who would love my children. I honestly thought I was not going to live many years. In my desperation, I made a deal with God. I asked God to grant me life until my daughter at least turned 18. Then I went home.

Well I lived 17 years with HIV and not being on medication. I did not tell anyone my status and I had one relationship where we both went for testing and we were both HIV positive. We practised safe sex. Unfortunately, that relationship broke down. After that relationship, I really shelved relationships to focus on staying alive and bringing up the children. The stress of sharing your status with every relationship you are in was too much for me. I needed to be in a space where it was safe for me to share such information and I decided that if I could not share that the relationship was not for me. Surprisingly I have never faced rejection for revealing my status but I only share on a "need to know" basis only.

After 17 years of being HIV positive, I began to fall sick with small illnesses and I kept going for treatment. On one of those visits when I was in the nursing sister's office, she really counselled me, as my blood pressure (BP) was surprisingly high that day. She wanted to put me on BP medication but I refused because I had never struggled with high blood pressure but it was being sick that was stressing me. She asked me if I had ever been for an HIV test and I told her I had been HIV positive for 17 years but had not been on medication. She then asked me if I was married or if I had a partner. I told her no and that I had not been in a relationship for many years. She asked me why and my answer was "I just want to take care of the children and get them through university". I did not want the distraction that came with relationships. She then said that I needed someone in my life to bring balance and support. It reminded me of what Elizabeth Gilbert wrote in her book "Eat Pray Love" that "Losing your balance for love is part of living a balanced life."

I did eventually go on ARV's. The medical staff could not believe I had lived with HIV for 17 years and no medication. They gave me ARVs for 3 months and instructed me that I had to tell someone close about my condition in case I fell ill. The only people I could tell were my children. It is the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Would they judge me, would they be afraid.

They were supportive! It did not shake them one bit! I thank the education system that teaches our children about HIV. They were relieved that now I knew what was making me sick and that there was a solution. They always encourage me to remember to take my medication. I have been on ARVs for 2 years now. I have not missed even one day of my medication. I have also not suffered any major illness.

Eating healthy when you have a chronic disease is so important. It can be hard for many people as many comfort eat to overcome stress. I have learnt to eat a balanced diet most of the time. Of course, I cheat sometimes, but in general, I eat healthy food. Vegetables, fruits, proteins, and legumes. I drink herbal teas, water mostly, and avoid fizzy drinks and sugary foods. Exercise is also important because it also boosts your mental health. It does not need to be an intense workout, even 10 minutes a day or just walking. I try to exercise 5 days a week resting on Sundays.

Stress is another thing that will compromise your health. Worry less, and meditate more. Get rid of toxic relationships and friendships. Love without apology, be a giver and make a conscious decision to be joyful and to love yourself. Have “me” time, pamper yourself do the things you have always wanted to do. Look to a higher power because there is always someone that is greater than you are. Just live your best life.

As I write this account, I just received my blood test results saying the virus is undetectable now in my blood stream. These days starting ARVs is encouraged on testing positive. Our Ministry of Health, having collaborated with international organisations, ensures that free medication and counselling is availed to many. As I collect my blood test results today, I see people from all walks of life. Some have come here on foot, whilst others have come in luxury vehicles. This virus is no respecter of persons. People mingle, talk and laugh. Some have been infected by bad choices, others innocently and unknowingly or from birth. It does not matter how you got it or from whom, what is important is to live. To live protecting yourself and protecting others.

Putting my story on paper has forced me to look deep inside myself and face some truths. I have come to the realisation that I am angry with myself and have been angry for some 20 plus years although I suppressed those feelings. I am angry because I feel I should have known better. I was careless. I did not take the precautions that I should have taken to protect myself against contracting the virus. I put my daughter’s life at risk, what if she had contracted the virus in the womb or through the birth process. I feel I was irresponsible and that is the crux of the matter. I realise that the reason I was so hesitant to share my status with my mother, my siblings, my friends is because, I do not want others to label me "irresponsible" and “reckless”. It is hard, and for the first time in a long time, I have cried over my status. They are not tears of bitterness but tears of relief because now that I have acknowledged and confronted my feelings of irresponsibility and recklessness I can begin the healing process. To heal completely I must forgive myself. I must be kind to myself. We all make mistakes; some with lifelong consequences, but it is what we do after that that matters.

My children are now young adults 25 and 22 years old and God even blessed me with a foster son who is now 20. I think of the plea I made to God all those years ago in London. God has been so faithful. He has kept His end of the bargain more than I thought or imagined. Now I can dream of a future, to reach old age in good health, to experience graduations, weddings, grandchildren, and love. When I asked God who would love my children 20 years ago, I did not realise that God had answered, "*You will love your children. You will be here!*" My heart is full!

### **Ellen P. Jordan Bio**

Ellen P. Jordan is a mother of 3, a published author and a champion of seeing the economic emancipation of women in her community by offering them opportunities to open their own businesses, training and mentoring them to succeed and achieve self-sufficiency. She also runs a publishing company and strongly advocates that individuals write their stories, whether it is His story or Her story, those stories must be told.

## **I am Still Me by Patty**

My teenage and early adult years were pretty standard, in my opinion. I mean, growing up in a Christian family with a strict mother, you do not get to do much except go to church. So I was pretty involved in church and church activities, and I loved it. All I wanted was to get married, have one or two children, and live my life normally. I have always been a believer, so if you sold me a dream, I would trust you - no questions asked. This is what happened with John.

Although we lived in different cities, I was confident it would work. I tried to meet up with John as much as possible. He even introduced me to some of his relatives. Things were moving smoothly in 2012 that I even did a course in Family Counselling and did my attachment at a local clinic. I was placed at the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) department. Every day we had people coming in to know their status. You could tell this person is not listening to this gospel of positive living. They just wanted the tests done, and they left the place. Some would move around like they did not want to come in; only when it was clear of people, would they rush in. Already everybody knew that society would judge and discriminate no matter the efforts made to educate people about the disease.

I recall this day my colleagues jokingly said, 'imagine offering all this pre and post counselling to others only for you to find out you have it! Will you take your advice?'

It became awkward in the room. I am sure everyone was lost in their thoughts, and we just laughed it off. I had seen many cry. Some would fight right there with many accusations, and some you could tell that this person's world has been crushed, and there was not much you could do.

So one Tuesday morning while at work, I just thought about it and decided to test myself. 'Like what could be the harm in that?'

I mean, I was very well behaved and had one boyfriend who was my fiancée. At that point, I was a month pregnant with our baby. Therefore there was nothing to be scared of. I waited until lunch when everyone else was outside, then I tested myself, and the results came out positive. I could not believe it, and I rationalized it as a mistake.

'How can I have such a disease?'

I ignored it and almost forgot about it. I remember the jokes we would say around the clinic about 'these' people, especially young ladies and how you did not want to be associated with such people regardless of being a counsellor or nurse.

'They' should have just known better.

Things started going wrong the weekend I was supposed to get married. My fiancée's wife called my mum to tell her that John, the man I was planning to marry, was a married man and that I should get tested. She put it as simply as that. My mum called me to say go and see your aunt. I did not even understand why and thought maybe those 'talks' you are given before marriage, so I went. The way my aunt looked at me told me something was wrong. My aunt only announced that I needed to accompany her somewhere as we got off from the kombi (public transport). When I saw the VCT sign immediately, I knew. My heart started pounding fast, and I tried acting normal. However, inside, all hell was breaking loose we got there and went to speak to the counsellor. Now I was sitting at the other end, hearing things I used to tell others.

I was not paying attention. All I could think about was what if it's true. Why would I continue living? The results came back. Of course, it was positive! I almost ran out of the building. All I could ask was why me?

I have been pretty good, I have been praying, and I listened to my parents. So why would this happen to me?

My aunt did all she could to comfort me. After a while, she then informed me about the call from John's wife, so I was not only having this status review news dawn on me. I also had to process that the man I had given my everything and planned my life with was a cheater and a monster. That is what I thought of him. I wanted to strangle him.

How could he do this to me?

I remember at one point running in front of an oncoming car. If it were not for my aunt, I would probably be dead. I completely shut down. My family could not leave me alone. They were scared I might do something. At every moment, I kept thinking about the child.

How will it survive this disease? Would the child be normal?

I was scared, hurt, angry, and I lost the pregnancy in the process. At first, I was happy because it was like God knew that the child would have a difficult life.

Being at home was tough for me. I love my mum, but she was not ready or equipped to help me on this issue. She would take me to different pastors' healing sessions, and it was so draining and embarrassing. I recall one time we attended a big church, and there were cameras everywhere. One had to write one's disease on a placard and raise it high towards the camera so someone would pray for you. In my mind, I kept thinking, 'is it worth it?'

Had my life come to this, where my mother would drag me to every preacher who claimed to heal HIV. I could tell this hurt my mum, and in turn, it hurt me more because I felt I had let her down. Wherever she said let us go, I would. It became tiring, and when you get tested again and get another positive, it would feel like you are hearing it for the first time. She would always say you should believe and pray hard. She even narrated stories of how some people testified that they got healed. She continued to tell me to be earnest and determined that my healing would come to the extent it hurt more. I began to resent her for some time, and I did all I could to be away from her. It took a lot for me to see her side and understand that she was doing all this because, ultimately, all she wanted was for me to be better and live a normal life like everyone else.

When you go to the clinic, there is a site where people who have HIV get their pills. A dispensary only for them, NOT us. The split dispensary sites seemed to communicate that we could not mix with everyone else. At "THE" dispensary site, everyone looked like death. They did not have hope. It was disheartening, but then you would always get a few that seemed to be having things go their way smiling and conversing. At first, I thought they were on the wrong side of the clinic. Slowly I started accepting 'my fate', as I called it. There would be days when I would send messages to John, cursing him telling him how I wish he would die. Other days would be better than others, but other things in life did change. I was not so much into God anymore somehow. I felt He let me down. I even started drinking to forget, but the fact that you have to take a pill every day alone was a reminder enough to bring me back to reality. I would skip my medication on some days, especially weekends when I would be out with my friends and I didn't want them to find out about the pills.

I remember when I went to the clinic, and they told me my viral load was too much. I had to go through counselling again and lessons on positive living consistent with taking pills, eating healthy food, practicing safe sex and not stressing. That is when I decided to do better for myself.

The problem I was now facing was in the dating area.

How do you have a conversation with someone about that? Even hypothetically, it seemed no man wanted to be involved with someone like me. No matter how many guys would say, "it is just a condition, it does not matter much."

You learn that your status mattered when they started calling less and seeing you less. The excuses become many, so opening up became a burden. I could not deal with the disappointment I would get from being told, "I cannot date someone like you!"

I got tired of someone giving you hope only to disappoint you later, telling you, "I thought I could handle it but I cannot".

The process takes a toll on your emotions. The upside to this was taking my medication religiously and eating healthy whenever possible. I really wanted to have Target Not Detected (TND) written in my book. Thank God it did happen, so I was optimistic about love again, but then again, even with that, most people do not know much about the disease. To them, you were promiscuous, that is why you have the disease. Also, the side note that the disease could and cannot be cured meant it was more of a death sentence. I joined a few HIV dating sites, and the men there looked sick, as wrong as that sounds.

Even among the positives, we also judge ourselves. Most adverts will read "LOOKING FOR A PARTNER WHO IS ON MEDICATION but WHO DOES NOT LOOK SICK! WHO IS TAKING CARE OF THEMSELVES!" Once you go on these sites, the problem is that it comes off as if you are desperate, and every man that comes to your inbox feels you should date them, never mind that the other qualities are lacking. And at times, you want to be with someone you like and are attracted to without worrying about what the guy will say or if he will still love you after knowing about your status.

I cannot remember how many times I have been asked, "How will you have kids? Is it safe?"

I have now made it a policy not to disclose my status to everyone just because I like them. So many times, I have been rejected even by those that promise to love me unconditionally. The sad reality is that stigma is still very much there in our societies, even within our families, and the onus is really on us, the infected, to look after ourselves physically and mentally. Especially mentally, people think that when you are sad or down *urikuzviitisa*. You just want people to feel sorry for you, but the mental struggles are real. There are days you doubt yourself.

*"You ask yourself if you are worthy of love like everyone else.*

*If you had done things differently, I maybe should have waited on sex or maybe I should have been more careful.*

*I should have used protection or better still. I should have just not gone for the test."*

All these thoughts come into your mind, "what if he rejects me? What if he tells his colleagues or friends that saw us together *kuti munhu uya akamira so*" - all that weighs on you.

There would be days when I was afraid to put my picture in that group after joining these dating groups. What if someone recognized me! I even choose to take my medication at a clinic that is not in my locale

because I cannot risk bumping into my neighbour or someone from church. I just do not have the strength to deal with their staring eyes, gossip, and whatnot and getting so many bottles of pills that they will make a noise in the handbag all the way home. Everyone will just be looking at you like they can see through your bag, and they know you well (*at least it will feel like that*). There will be days when you do not use a condom, knowing that you just want to do it the same way as other people. You want to be able to date the person you like without worrying about the "TALK". If you do not manage all these thoughts, you will live in depression. Even as a counsellor, there are days when I fail to pick myself up to encourage myself and say, "you know what, I am valuable! I do deserve love and to be happy! Just because I am positive, it does not mean I have to stop living or to enjoy life".

The advice I can give those with the same condition is: do not be too hard on yourself, and it is okay to put yourself first. Your mental health is essential. Please do not ignore your feelings or be ashamed of them. There will be days when you feel like giving up when you will be mad at everyone, the world, and even yourself, and you will not have the strength or will to go on. Just know that it is okay. It does not make you a bad or weak person. Just have a support system, a friend or someone to talk to who will not judge you, make you feel worse about yourself, or have something you enjoy doing. Yes, we have this disease in us, but I have realized it is not a death sentence after all, and I'm not different from the next person. I still feel pain just as they do. I desire to be loved, respected and wanted just as much as they do. Though I have it in me, it does not define me or control my life. You can take control of your life and enjoy your life just as any other person you deserve to be happy with!

### **Patty Bio**

I am Patty a 38 year old lady who loves life, is hopeful of love, a counsellor by passion and by profession.

## Miracle of Science by Wadzanai Valerie Garwe

I am a miracle of science. I do not remember the date I discovered I was HIV positive. I think it is part of my trauma. I know the year – 1992. I was 26 years old. I was in my first serious relationship – one that actually became marriage. There was no inkling that my life was going to change that day. My ancestors did not come to me in my dreams. I had no premonition of doom. My friend Farai was selling life insurance and as a good friend, I signed up. Signing up involved having a blood test. I was at my fittest. I was walking 10 kilometres per day, playing basketball and partying like a rock star. I was living at home, as girl children do in our culture and going out every night. I had a fantastic job, I had a car and I was living my best life. I had spent the night with my then boyfriend/future husband/now ex-husband and together we went to sign my life insurance papers.

I had no pre-counselling. I knew nothing about HIV/AIDS, except that it was killing people, and I had started going to funerals for people my age. I was a confident, almost arrogant, privileged and very free young person – as one should be. “We cannot give you a policy. You tested HIV positive”. Farai looked stricken. I was trying to process these words.

My trauma response to bad news is to immediately look for solutions.

That day my life changed irrevocably.

My partner was amazing. He took me into his arms, looked into my eyes and told me we were all dying in one way or another and I could choose to see this as a death sentence or I could live. You know that there is some sort of scientific study that once you buy something you start seeing it everywhere. According to Wikipedia, I google everything, “there is a concept in psychology called **the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon**, also known as the frequency illusion, where once you purchase a new car you start seeing it everywhere. The idea is that there is an attentional 'awakening' to the object that now holds value to you”.

Suddenly HIV was everywhere. I had family members dying around me. In 1992 there was no cure. There were no drugs. AIDS was a death sentence. The biggest problem is that I was now a fly on the wall observing my life. I was no longer participating. I was waiting to die! I have never said that before. I need to say it again. I was waiting to die!

I could not tell my parents. Firstly, as the first daughter, the eldest, the example in whom my parents had invested greatly how could I tell them I was sexually active? HIV/AIDS was associated with promiscuity. Studies were being conducted on prostitutes in Kenya who had not got the virus in spite of numerous sexual partners. I was the first generation of children born to activists who had participated in the liberation struggle. I was one of the first Africans to go to multiracial schools. My parents sacrificed everything to ensure that I would succeed. And to all outward appearances I was killing it. I had a fantastic job working for the United Nations. I had a first degree in finance from the United States. I was dating and my parents' vision/investment was paying off. I was contributing to society and all that was left was to marry me off and I would have children and the white picket fence. I have to stop and read that. I was the example pushed down the throat of my siblings – “the good girl who listened to her parents”.

My life changed. I became addicted to living on the edge. I could not tell anyone I was HIV positive. Three people knew my secret – Farai, my partner and I. Inside I was dying. I was so afraid. However, that fear could not be expressed or processed. The risks I took included risks within my career. In 1992 I went from being a somewhat typical 26 year old to a person living on the edge. My life fell apart. I started to drink alcohol. This was not an issue. I came from a family that taught us to drink responsibly but I had never had

a desire to drink. I used to party all night and drink Fanta. I smoked weed. I wanted to be high. I wanted to laugh and see the absurdity of life. I lived my life on fast forward. I was packing in my experience so that if I did die, I would have done it all.

My friends started dying. A celebrity radio presenter died and she was my friend. I had one discussion with her and confessed that I was HIV positive and she was too. We had one of those intense conversations about life, love and the absurdity of living and then I was in church mourning her death. In her, I now see the parallels to the reckless abandon with which we were both self-destructing. Packing in experience. Funerals were traumatic. The funeral of an age mate whom you admire is soul destroying.

What killed us was the silence. We, those who were HIV positive, could not speak out. Imagine a young woman who was waiting for marriage, whom was I going to tell? Everyone thought I had my whole life ahead of me.

In many ways, my partner and I developed a co-dependence. He became my rescuer, my knight in shining armour, my confidante, my therapist and I put a lot onto his shoulders. He was 21 and I was the cradle snatching older woman at 26. Our relationship was toxic from the start because of the co-dependent state we had. We were “Bonny and Clyde”! In many ways, that is how our relationship played out -Us against the world until we stopped being just US. Our whole marriage was predicated on the fact that he had chosen me and I could kill him. We were a discordant couple. He was HIV negative and I was HIV positive. We tried using condoms responsibly but youth, alcohol and drugs were a recipe for unprotected sex.

“How did you get HIV” is the first question I would get if I shared my status with a friend. Does it matter? This desire to place you in a box. Acceptable HIV – blood transfusion or you were pricked by a needle during a medical procedure. Unacceptable HIV – sex, especially homosexual sex. “Did your husband give it to you? No he’s negative!” That confused them to no end. So let us speculate. How did I get HIV? I was a virgin at 21 – imagine. Then I decided I did not want to be a virgin anymore and picked an older guy. He was a fantastic person but a terrible lover – especially for the first time – giving him the gift of virginity”. The mantles we take on for society become laughable in hindsight. Then I had the intense love story of one’s early 20s. We had been at sister schools, he fit the profile of “a good family” and we were intellectually on par. What a “mind fuck” that relationship was! I was so in love until I was not. I broke both their hearts. I was also date raped twice, which was horrible, and a story for another book. I had one-night stands with three men – so pick one. Where did I get HIV? I do not know. It is a process of elimination. Could I blame the man whom I presumed infected me? Which one out of 7 and only one long-term. Does it really matter? No! It does not matter.

As I spun out of control, my partner also thought we only had a short time to live so we lived. We took incredible chances. I aborted a son who would be 30 in 2022 because I could not bring him into a world where I was HIV positive. We were not ready to face ourselves, let alone parent a child. Then we ran away “to be together” and to escape a fraudulent situation at work. I went to my sister Chipo’s workplace, literally dumped my HIV status, my chequebooks and my life in Zimbabwe on her, and told her “I don’t know when I will be back”. She’s also 5 years younger than I so imagine your older sister showing up at your office as a young professional and blowing your life out of the water. My poor sister. She became the fourth person to keep the secret.

We ran away to Mozambique and played house – in Shona, we call it “kubika mapoto”. We had \$3000 Zimbabwe Dollars which was a fair amount at that time. We border jumped as my Dad was in government and we did not want him to know where we were going. We lost most of the money to soldiers who caught us as border jumpers, and only let us go after massive bribes. Chipo found us after about 6 months, called the organization where I was working and we both burst into tears. Southern Africa is actually quite a small

place. We reinvented ourselves, got jobs and started to live our lives. Then we decided, with a little bit of pressure from our parents, that we would get married. Please remember that throughout this wonderful love story and prodigal son and daughter scenario, there are still only four of us keeping the secret.

Then I fell pregnant again! Abortion had been illegal in Zimbabwe where I had done it the first time. I had found a willing doctor and done it right. There was no way I could tempt fate a second time especially not as an expatriate in Mozambique. While we were playing house it was just the two of us. Bringing a human into my HIV world! What if I infected our child? How could I face myself and the child? I mean I knew what I was doing and it was a choice to have unprotected sex. The child, however, had not had a say in this arrangement.

I was plunged back into the trauma of the first day of the diagnosis. However, we were now playing to the gallery. We were now legitimately traditionally married, lobola (bride price) had been paid, and on 16 April 1994 I became a *Mrs.* To the world everything was perfect. A beautiful couple who were working in Mozambique. A huge wedding at the Sheraton Hotel with 500 guests of whom we were only allowed 10 invites as it was really a parental showcase. We had to grow up and start playing house.

Suddenly we went from carefree individuals to a unit expected to adult! Well adulting started to expose the cracks in our co-dependence. As the one carrying the child and with THE VIRUS I fell into depression. It is one of the things that we do not really speak about in HIV. At this point, 1994, antiretrovirals (ARVs) were not affordable to the general public. So I prayed. I made a deal with God. I have never been particularly religious, but in this case I said “please may my son be born without HIV and I promise I will never get pregnant again”. This was the stage of children born with HIV displaying symptoms of “failure to thrive.”

After his birth, I watched my son like a hawk. I just buried my head in the sand and hoped it would be okay. He was such a healthy baby. Full of life and healthy as a horse. I thanked God and kept my promise. I got birth control implanted – Norplant which prevented pregnancy for 5 years at a time. I was not making that mistake again. The only way to stop pregnancy is to abstain. My father passed away in 1997, never having found out I was HIV positive. After his death, I started bleeding. I had not had a period for 3 years and my body made up for it with the stress of my father’s death. I bled for 7 weeks. It started just after we buried him. I helped sort his papers with my Mum and then I went to Botswana for work. I was in the rural areas bleeding for 5 weeks. My sister picked me up at the airport and she was concerned. She took me to a doctor who immediately took out the Norplant and did a Dilatation and Curettage, (D&C). Wikipedia defines a D&C, as a surgical procedure in which the cervix (lower, narrow part of the uterus) is dilated (expanded) so that the uterine lining (endometrium) can be scraped with a curette (spoon-shaped instrument) to remove abnormal tissues. My bleeding stopped and the doctor advised me to use condoms until my body recovered. I was also grieving.

My partner never really liked condoms and he would stealth. It was all well and good but my uterus had just been recalibrated and thus was at its most productive. I was insisting on condoms and one night of course even though we started with a condom we ended without it. I know this sounds impossible but in every instant I knew the minute I was pregnant. It might be the heightened sense of ovulation or just that I am in tune with my body, but I knew I was pregnant. I did rail at God as I had been using condoms. I had genuinely been trying to stick to my part of the pact. For a month I refused to be pregnant. It sounds ludicrous now as I write it, but that is the truth. I just thought if I will this pregnancy away it will go away. There was more information now and at the same time I had Preeclampsia. Wikipedia defines it as a pregnancy complication characterized by high blood pressure and signs of damage to another organ system, most often the liver and kidneys. Preeclampsia usually begins after 20 weeks of pregnancy in women whose blood pressure had been normal. I had had it during my first pregnancy and this time within weeks of my second pregnancy my body was fighting. My sister stepped in again and took me to a

wonderful doctor, Dr. Peter Mbizvo, a general practitioner. Everyone needs a Dr. Peter in their lives. He was amazing. He soothed my fears and sent me to Dr. E. Hammond a wonderful gynaecologist who introduced me to Professor Elopy Sibanda an immunologist. This team of young doctors who were at the cutting edge of the science of the time. I took very expensive antiretroviral therapy for 3 months before the baby was born and 3 months after. I had to swallow fourteen large pills, 3 times a day for 6 months. The science of 1998 on HIV recommended a birth by Caesarean section (C-section) whereas my first birth had been natural birth. I was advised not to breastfeed as compared to 6-month breast-feeding for the first birth. While I was having the C-section, I elected to have a Tubal ligation — also known as having your tubes tied or tubal sterilization. I was not going to go through child birth again. I also had to take the ARVs to prevent mother to child transmission.

The two births were so starkly different. My son had been thrust onto my bosom as soon as he exited my womb and the umbilical cord was cut. During the C-section and tubal ligation I suffered one of the side effects which was a reaction to anaesthesia and almost stopped breathing so I did not see my daughter for a full 24 hours to ensure my recovery. I thought I had suffered a still-birth because I awoke in my hospital bed with no sign of my daughter anywhere. I had a few stitches from natural birth and I had a 6-week recovery from the C-section and tubal ligation.

Throughout these pregnancies my mother did not know I was HIV positive and I had to keep it all to myself. I still had 3 co-conspirators plus the doctors – no one else. I was thought of as weird because I did not attend funerals, they made me too sad and brought me into contact with crowds. I was afraid to catch tuberculosis as it became one of the diseases that was related to HIV. At this time 1 in 4 people was estimated to be HIV positive. People were dying. It was called the slimming disease. Stigma was at its highest. If one lost weight there were careless whispers about “watching out for sudden illness and death”. “*Ane Aids – he/she has Aids*” was the clarion call and indicated the hyenas were circling to feast on one’s corpse. Every death was personal to me. I think at this time I would have benefited from trauma counseling.

As the demands of parenting, building a nest, education, work and general living started to take their toll my ex-husband and I just grew further and further apart. As an HIV positive mother my primary preoccupation was ensuring life after my death for my children. I went from living on the edge of having fun and living my best life to living on the edge of trying to ensure I covered all possible bases for my children to live a full life. As the child of middle class parents, I was expected to keep those standards for my children so private school education, holidays, a home, and a middle class lifestyle. I focused on being the main breadwinner and ensuring my children got the best. Something had to give in our relationship. We had moved from Bonny and Clyde to some awkward wonder woman trying to do it all and my ex still finding stepping into fatherhood and adulting hard. That is my opinion and my observation he will tell his side of the story. I was also depressed I think a large part of the time.

In 2003, I had a major road traffic accident (RTA). We had just finished building our dream house. We had our 50-acre lawn and were playing happy families. As the breadwinner the accident was a huge drawback. I broke my right ulna, my left clavicle, needed to have glass removed in my left eye and I had laser surgery. I was broken but determined to live. My children were still very young. I concentrated on recovery to my detriment. I never processed the trauma of having a car accident and all the broken bones. In 2004 I was up and about needing to pay school fees and get right back on the hobby horse. I fell drastically ill in Tanzania with AIDS related pneumonia caused by my over stretched immune system. I walked into the Aga Khan Hospital in Dar es Salaam unable to breathe. It was ludicrous because when the doctor asked me if I had had any trauma to the chest I blithely said no. I had just survived an RTA with the broken bones to prove it. In fact, my right arm was in a cast because my ulna was in a great deal of pain. I later found out I still had some glass which had caused an infection and contributed to my diminished immune system. It took 3 days to discover that I had pneumonia. I did not have a high fever so there was nothing to indicate what

was wrong except that my oxygen levels were dangerously low. The poor doctor walked into my room, took a deep breath and said he had some devastating news for me. I thought I was dying. He then said you are HIV positive and your CD4 count is 4 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>. The CD4 count normal range is 500 to 1500 cell/mm<sup>3</sup>. If a patient is left untreated, levels can drop below 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>, which is one indication for the diagnosis of AIDS - Wikipedia.

I had AIDS!

I laughed as well as I could behind the oxygen mask. The poor man looked confused. I said “oh I know I must have forgotten to tell you”. The man was gobsmacked. He had thought he would be delivering life altering news to me and here I was completely un-phased. If I had the strength I would have hugged him but at this point the 3 days to get the diagnosis cost me. My situation disintegrated rapidly. I was airlifted to Zimbabwe to my wonderful Prof. Sibanda.

I had always been an upbeat patient, very cavalier about science, my motto being let us try everything. In Dar I was put on a drip of intravenous cotrimoxazole, that drug saved my life many times and a raft of other antibiotics. My Mum and Chipu flew in, and this is when my poor Mum found out I was HIV positive, well technically, I had AIDS. At this point, I was frail and thin, and about to die. I was flown to Zimbabwe and put on a ventilator. Prof. Sibanda asked me to make a will. This is the only time I have ever seen Prof. rattled. He gave me “THE TALK”. I am so glad I am not a doctor. Imagine preparing your patient for death. The talk is a preparation for losing one’s life. He said he could not predict how things would go. I should make a will and prepare my children. I have earth angels I tell you.

I am alive. I have subsequently survived a hostage situation, hysterectomy after bleeding profusely for a year, divorce, a complete mental breakdown in which I had to be hospitalized, single parenting and continuing to run many households as my children started college and relocated elsewhere. The divorce is a whole story in itself, which will be the subject of my next book.

I am a miracle of science. I have been on antiretroviral therapy since 2004. I have been undetectable ever since I started my ARVs. Prior to ARVs I survived because I followed the science of the time. In the 1990s until ARVs were widely available it was Abstain, Be faithful or reduce the number of your sex partners, and/or use a Condom - commonly known as the ABC of HIV. I always have eaten well as my mother used to say that food was the best way to heal. After my brush with death aka pneumonia my Aunt took me home and fed me back to health. Nutrition is the key to staying healthy. I exercise. I would like to leave you with my lessons from being HIV positive

1. Protect your mental health. Guard your soul jealously. Leave a toxic situation no matter what. Be it a spouse, partner, child, mother, father or any relative, friend and/or boss. If it vexes your mind it can reduce your immunity and make you ill. Walk away. Leave. Quit. Stop interacting with that person. Set clear boundaries. Control those boundaries. Say No. Block and delete toxic people. Do not interact. Remember toxicity pertains to you. That person may not be toxic to other people. That’s okay! Guard your soul jealously!
2. Treat every opportunistic illness. Treat your flu. In fact get a flu shot. If you fall ill get immediate care. Treat anything that can affect your immunity. I am paranoid about getting the coronavirus. I only interact with people I trust to understand my level of paranoia.
3. Take your ARVs religiously. Take that pill. I panic if I am running out.
4. Get an annual blood test to check your viral load
5. Sleep
6. Follow good nutritional practices. Eat nutritional food. Eat well. Do not compromise your health

7. Surround yourself with love. I only interact with those who love me fiercely. They are allowed in. My pets are my first line of defense.
8. Understand contraindications in medication. I very rarely take painkillers, largely because I do not need them, but also because I do not want to increase the risk of compromising my kidneys. There are side effects to taking any long term treatment. Read the pamphlet. If you experience anything out of the ordinary change the treatment. I changed my ARV therapy at the same time that I was experiencing extreme post-traumatic stress disorder. I kept saying to the doctor, but it does not appear on the contraindications but I keep blacking out. He said you could be patient 0. So we changed the medication and I stopped blacking out.
9. Have a good medical doctor who follows the developments in HIV therapy. I go to a specialist hospital in Rome. It is a public hospital that specializes in communicable diseases. Get a doctor who understands HIV and ensure that all doctors speak to each other. I have had a Hysterectomy while being HIV positive and having deep vein thrombosis. Ensure your doctors speak to each other.
10. Undetectable is Untransmissible: with the ARV therapy I am no longer transmitting the virus if I have unprotected sex because the virus is undetectable in my body. I am not cured of the virus but I cannot transmit the virus. If I stop taking my ARVs the virus will invade my body again. So you can date and have sex with someone who is Undetectable after they have ensured they are undetectable for six months from the first time they are undetectable.
11. If you are afraid or unsure that you have been exposed to someone who has HIV and may be detectable you can take pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is an HIV prevention method in which people who don't have HIV take HIV medicine daily to reduce their risk of getting HIV if they are exposed to the virus. PrEP can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout your body.
12. Go to the UNAIDS site. Follow the science. Especially the young people. AIDS is still killing people.

## Wadzanai Bio



Wadzanai Valerie Garwe is a mother of two young adults, an author, a mental health and HIV activist, an executive coach, a mentor and a firm believer in the power of economic empowerment. The name Wadzanai means reconcile, or live in harmony in Shona. Wadzanai was born in Zimbabwe where she did all her primary and high school education, and she did her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the United States. Professionally, Wadzanai is an economist who studied finance and community economic development. She has worked in international development within Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and is currently working in the United Nations system. She has run a free-lance development consulting business, a family agricultural concern of 180 hectares, and is a coach and mentor, centring her coaching around workplace toxicity. Wadzanai is a co-facilitator of a platform '*African Conversations with Self*' that is collecting a video anthology of lived experiences of post-colonial Africa. It is also available as a podcast on Apple and Spotify. She has lived and worked in many places including the USA, Mozambique, Singapore, South Africa and currently Italy. Her passion is to ensure that she lives her best life and contributes towards making the amazing world we live in a wondrous adventure of growth and self-discovery.

## About the Artist



Silas Motse also known as (AKA) 'Ras' was born and bred in Thaba Nchu, a small isolated town called Motlatla in the Free State, South Africa. He holds a diploma in Fine Arts and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from the Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein. He is presently a Forensic analyst as a Facial identification artist for the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Ras' artistic practice involves a psychological and spiritual journey back into his past. He learns more about his status in society, his contribution to society, and how people before him have contributed. His influences include his recurring childhood memories, those of others he encounters, and the people he meets. Through his creative process, Ras learns more about himself and

the world he lives in. He seeks answers from his work, although usually the questions that he set out to answer only find more questions. His work is inspired by the desire to learn, discover and explore. Ras works with anything that can make a mark, including charcoal, paints, and digital. He also uses any surface he can find suitable to explore the adaptability and resilience of human behaviour. His art helps him to reflect on his journey through life as an orphan and connects it to what we see, feel and live in space and time.

Ras' daily routine in his studio begins with a meditation and burning imphepo (incense) as an element to accessing images and memories from his childhood. His practice is stylistically and structurally experimental, stemming from a desire to invoke the spirits deep within, those of our ancestors, as a means to seek peace and ask for guidance rooted in African knowledge systems, accompanied by a melancholy musical background. Research about Africa and its people is topical right now - where we come from and where we are heading - Ras' ability to include historical symbols of culture and struggles allow him the joy of paying respect to his ancestors, through his journey of figuring himself out through painting, sketching, and throwing paint in a two-dimensional space.

Ras' work is a reflection of human emotions in life situations. He reflects on the outer and inner image of himself. With the use of vast colours in his work, he draws inspiration directly from the colours of different African cultures. For him they reflect his personal journey that functions as an element to portray his state of mind, past, moments, emotions, surroundings and Afro futuristic dreams.

Ras' process is heavily based on healing, finding, recognition and dreaming of self while dealing with the trauma of being an African. He questions what it is that makes us who we are on this life ship.

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## About the Editors

### Farayi Mangwende Profile

#### Group Marketing and Strategy Executive

Farayi is responsible for providing high level, functional leadership and strategies for all First Mutual Holdings Limited Group companies in the areas of marketing, corporate affairs, internal & external communications, as well as media and stakeholder relations. She is also in charge of the strategy co-ordination and monitoring for the Group.

Her career of more than 25 years has given her experience in various sectors of industry in Zimbabwe, United Kingdom and sub-Saharan Africa where she has had exposure in marketing, corporate communications, public relations, communication strategy formulation & implementation, investor & stakeholder relations, media management, crisis management and event management. In her career she has been instrumental in raising the profile of Dairibord Zimbabwe Limited, African Sun Limited and the First Mutual Group through strategic marketing and communication initiatives.



She is a holder of a Master's degree in Public Communication & Public Relations from the University of Westminster (UK). Farayi sits on the Southmed Chitungwiza hospital board and is an immediate past trustee for the Culture Fund Trust of Zimbabwe. She is actively involved in fund raising for Harare Central Hospital, well as various other charitable institutions, and is a young adults transformation agent through mentoring programmes. She is a past alumni of the FORTUNE / US State Department / VITAL VOICES Global Women's Mentoring Programme, Washington D.C. and was one of 33 women leaders from emerging economies globally selected to participate in the programme in April 2011.

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## About the Ethnographer



Dr. Gaynor Paradza holds a PhD in Law and Governance (Wageningen) and an MSc in Rural and Urban Planning (University of Zimbabwe). She is a Land Governance expert with more than 15 years' experience in capacity development, research and policy development in relation to land tenure, gender mainstreaming, rural and urban development planning, local, government administration and management, agriculture value chain analysis, research design and analysis, and publication on land and agrarian issues and livelihood issues. Gaynor has experience in international, provincial and local level government in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dr Paradza has managed regional policy programmes and disseminated information through advocacy and extensive participation in conferences and publications.

## Publications

[Chigbu, U.E., G. Paradza and W. Dachaga \(2019\) 'Differentiations in Women's Land Tenure Experiences: Implications for Women's Land Access and Tenure Security in Sub-Saharan Africa'. \*Land\* 8\(2\):22 Special Issue \*Land, Land Use and Social Issues\*.](#)

Paradza, G. and E. Sulle (2015) 'Agrarian Struggles in Mozambique Sugar Cane Plantations' in R. Hall, I. Scoones and D. Tsikata (eds) *Africa's Land Rush. Rural Livelihoods and Agrarian Change*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers.

[Greenberg, S. and G. Paradza \(2013\) 'Smallholders and the "Walmart Effect" in South Africa' in S. Greenberg \(ed.\) \*Smallholders and Agro-food Value Chains in South Africa in South Africa Emerging Practices, Emerging Challenges\*, pp. 54-65 .](#)

Aliber, M., T. Maluleke, T. Manenzhe, G. Paradza and B. Cousins (2013) *Livelihoods After Land Reform – Trajectories of Change in Northern Limpopo Province*. South Africa: HSRC.

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Makura-Paradza G.G. (2010) *Single Women, Land and Livelihood Vulnerability in the Communal Areas of Zimbabwe*. Wageningen Publishers: Wageningen.

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Paradza G. G. (2009) 'Intergenerational Struggles over Urban Housing: The impact on Livelihoods of the Elderly in Zimbabwe'. *Gender and Development* 17 (3): 417–26.

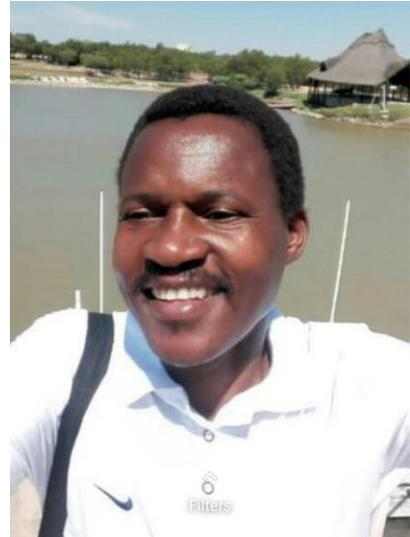
Kakuru, D. and G. Paradza (2007) 'Reflections on the use of the life history method in researching rural African women: field experiences from Uganda and Zimbabwe'. *Gender and Development*, 15(2): 287–97.

## About the Transcribers and Translators

### Transcriber and Translator Shona to English

Daniel Piki has spent his life using his personal and career experiences to help his fellow persons with disabilities overcome discrimination, stigma and provide them with the support they need when their life seems to be more than they can handle. As the son of a Headman, he knows how being vulnerable can affect every facet of one's life as well as the lives of their loved ones. While his focus is on disability rights, he also provides services for children, adults and families who have a vulnerable person in their clan including people living with HIV/AIDS.

He knows there is no single approach that works for everyone, so he continues to educate himself on emerging disability models, medical and psychosocial trends to provide the most comprehensive program that works for each of his client's individual needs. He has experience in disability activism, primary care nursing, project management, research, and many others.



He received his education at the University of Ireland where he studied Disability Law and Policy. He also holds a Diploma in Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation from Bindura University of Science Education. He holds a Higher Diploma in Computer Studies from Kushinga Phikhelela Polytechnic and is a qualified Sawdoctor from Forest Industries Training Centre. He also holds a Certificate in Nurse Aiding from SouthMed Chitungwiza Hospital School of Nursing. He is an avid researcher, and his work has been published in a book, Political Participation in Zimbabwe published by Arupe College. He compiles, transcribes and translates Shona/English life stories of the HIV affected and afflicted.

Daniel is currently volunteering as a Programs Coordinator for a Non-governmental organisation in Harare, where he lives with his wife and three young children. In this anthology he transcribed and translated the Shona stories.

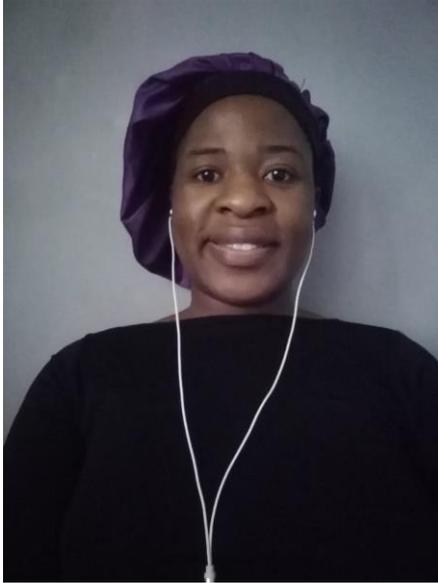
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### **Translator Shona to English**

Patience Mpundu is 38 years old. She is a social worker. Patty is a religious person who strongly believes one should have some fear of God, as this will help in life and in decision-making. She also believes that one's greatest critic is oneself! We sometimes judge ourselves too harshly and expect too much from ourselves. If we can learn to take it easy sometimes and acknowledge we do err or fail and that it's OK then we will be happier. Love as much as you can, cry as much as you need to but stay hopeful. Patty is a believer in all things good.

Connect with Patience

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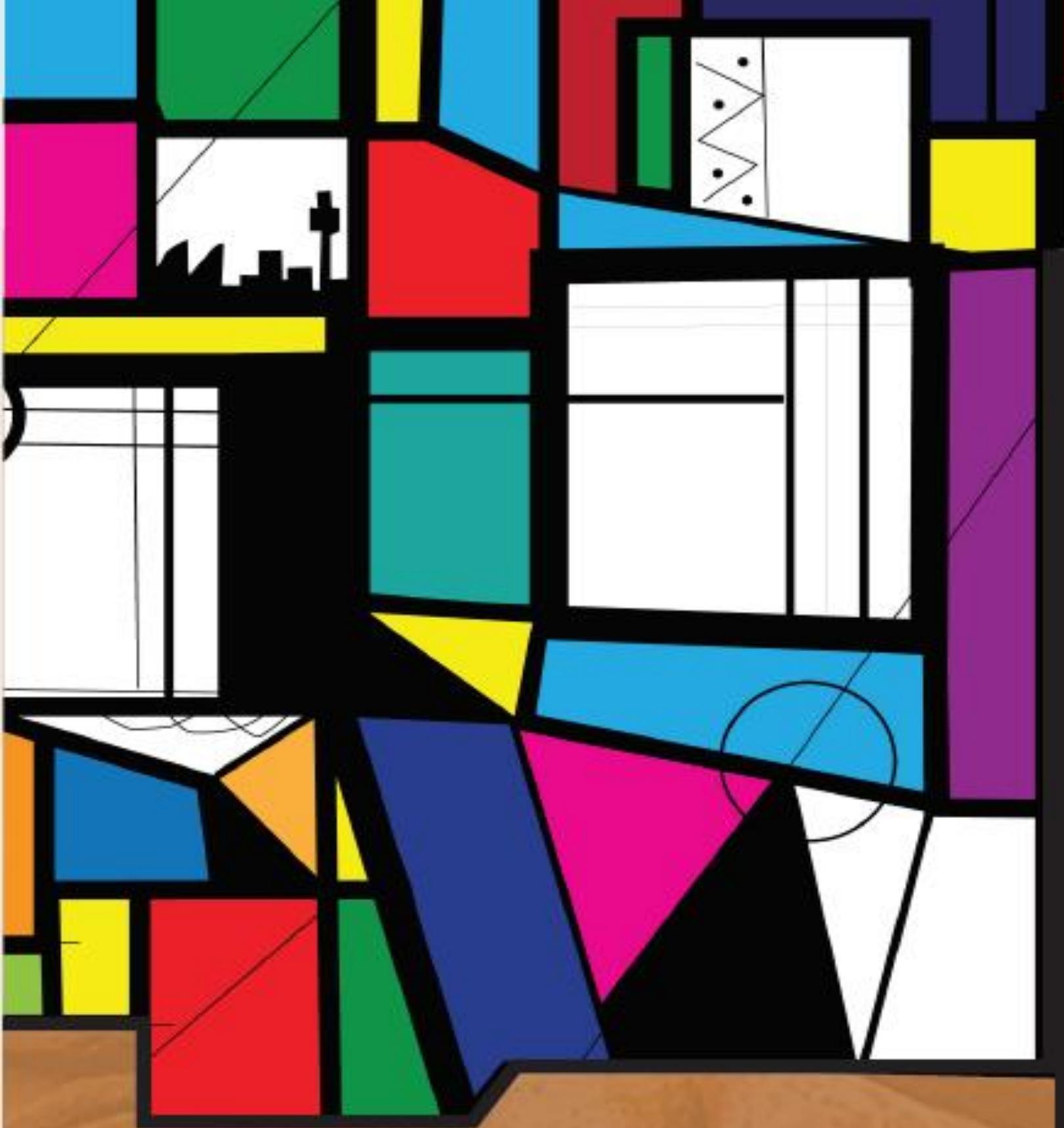
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