

# Bokamoso Youth from South Africa

January 13, 2008

## Sipho

One day I took a walk with my two friends, because that day for us was boring and we had nothing to do, but to walk. While we were walking, we saw many people far away from us. We thought they are discussing something or maybe they are solving their problems and we thought we know them because they were in our place. When we approach them they were on a bike and two of them jumped from the bike pointing at us with guns! We were scared, but one of my friends ran away. I wanted to follow him, but I realized that I'm too late and I was scared they will shoot me. One of the criminals went to my other friend, and one came to me.

*Shosholozza by the Bokamoso Youth*

The one who came to me said, "Where is the money?"

I told him, "I don't have any money."

So he said, "Why do you walk at night if you don't have money?" I didn't respond and he said, "I don't want to see you again at night if you don't have any money, okay?"

*Mandela by the Bokamoso Youth*

I said, "Yes." Then I asked, "Can I go home?"

He said, "No! Give me your T-shirt."

I took it off and I gave it to him. When I wanted to go, he said, "Where do you think you are going? Give me your shoes!" Oh, I took off my newest pair of shoes and gave them to him with a broken heart. So I thought he will also want my trousers, but fortunately he didn't.

He said, "Run away. I don't want to see you here."

I ran away without T-shirt and my newest shoes, but with a broken heart. Since that day, I told myself that I will never walk at night.

## Oscar

I remember it was on the 29th of December, after I pass my Matric. I phone my father and tell him about my results. All in all, he was so excited about it.

So he say to me, "My boy, you must come and visit me on the 31st of December, 2003."

I was so excited! When I went to my father's place I found the neighbor, who explained to me that my father is moving out to another place. The worst part of it is that my father promised me that he had enough money for me to go to University, but he doesn't. I was disappointed to hear that he was moving to another place.

The following year, I started to stay at home doing nothing – only waking up and watching television. I started to lose

confidence, and focus on myself, discouraging myself through my mind.

After two years doing nothing, a friend came to me and explained that I must go and ask for information about the Bokamoso Youth Centre. After asking, I started attending the ADP class and Love Life. Now I fulfill my vision and focus; I do believe in myself; I am learning lots of things in Bokamoso; and my friends are supportive.

## **Beth**

It was in the middle of the year 1998, when my father got retrenched from work due to restructuring of the company.

It was hard for us to live, financially and socially, because we had nothing. That was when I thought about quitting school and staying at home, because it was hard going to school with an empty stomach, and every day the teacher asking me in front of the class why I am not wearing the proper school uniform and when am I going to pay my two years' school fees?

The my biology teacher realized that I was planning to quit school, and she talked to me about why it is important for me to have education and why it is important for me to try to do better than I was doing then. And she bought me lunch everyday, and assisted me with her children's uniforms. But it was not enough, because my siblings were still suffering.

One day I sat down and asked myself if it's worth it to fail just because of my parents' problems. Then a big "NO!" came into my head. That's when I picked up all the pieces of my life and decided to live a whole life as if I had everything

that I wanted.

In 1999, my father got his retrenchment package and life was at least back to normal for my family.

## **Stephina**

It was on the 29th of December, 2005. I woke up earlier than any other day. I woke up at four o'clock in the morning and began praying. I was anxious and curious. I couldn't sleep again. I sat on my bed worrying for two hours. Then it was six o'clock.

I went to my parents' room and knocked on the door and said, "Oh, Daddy, I am so sorry to wake you early but we have to go and buy a newspaper."

Then he replied, "So early?" Then I begged him until he woke up. He drove to the place where newspapers are sold. We found a lot of people waiting for the newspapers.

Then we asked the guy who sells newspapers, "Where are the newspapers?"

He answered, "The newspapers will arrive at nine o'clock."

I became angry. I was angry at the guy who sells newspapers even though I knew it wasn't his fault that the newspapers hadn't arrived. I was angry at everybody, but I had no choice. I had to go back home. But I told my father to leave money; then we will come back to fetch the newspaper.

When I arrived home that feeling came back again, the feeling of anxiety and curiosity, the feeling of being eager to know. I couldn't settle. I stood up and sat down and I watched the clock as it was ticking.

Then at last it was nine o'clock!

I told my father to go and fetch the newspaper alone because I couldn't go with him. My father went to fetch the newspaper and he came back at 9:30. He handed me the newspaper and said, "Look at your name."

I opened the newspaper slowly; then I saw my name.

I smiled.

I shouted, "Mom, I have passed my Matric!"

My mother congratulated me and I was so proud of myself.

## **Jeffrey**

It was 1997, I was doing Grade Six. I was supposed to go to Middle School in 1998, but the lightning struck – I failed! I couldn't believe it – I was sure I had passed! I was sad because my friends had left me behind. I had to repeat Grade Six. I passed at the end of the year, and I went on to Middle School and passed my Grades Seven and Eight. But then I failed my Grade Nine, and I felt bad and useless. I had to repeat the grade again, but at the end of the year, I passed very well and went on to High School. I passed my Grade Ten very well, but in Grade Eleven I performed badly. So, when I went to Grade Twelve, I became introspective. I decided to reflect on all the grades I failed. I had failed Grades Six and Nine, and I was worried that I would fail for a third time – Grade

Twelve. Without passing my matric, I wouldn't be able to go on to college or university. So, I decided to work hard at my books. Sometimes I found myself reading all through the night and into the morning. And I passed my matric – I was happy for myself!

## Chris

I did not mean for this thing to be poetic  
But I guess I just wanted it to be realistic  
This whole thing is so unpleasant –like a feeling of burning plastic  
The pain is rising and rising like tastic  
Well, I am here to unfold my internal victim into justice.

This goes out to uncaptured moments which I once lost from my father

I thought we would go further  
But life and the unexpected blew it all away like a feather.  
Lost and confused was my family and mother  
This whole family sunshine turned into some terrible rainy weather,  
Not knowing whether  
I should go or should stay and wait for things to go smoother.

I don't know the date my father was declared late  
All I know is my mother lost a soulmate,  
The loving family man who did more than just put food on the plate.

A family of four, will we survive or become poor?  
A mother, two daughters and a son  
A son who never sat on his father's lap until he fell asleep,  
A son who never went to Daddy for advice,  
A son who only knew "daddy" as a word.

Having said all that, I don't mean to blame  
I don't want to hear the word "shame"

All I realize is that life is a big game  
And is order to reach your fame  
You have to play with a big strong heart.

Miss you, Dad!

## **Margaret**

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

When they call your jobless son  
A tsotsi, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

When they call your husband at the House of God  
A Boy, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

When they rape your daughter in detention and call her  
A whore, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

When they call your white sister  
A madam, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

When they call your white brother  
A baas (boss), Say No.

Say No, Black Woman  
Say No

To unprotected sex, when you know HIV/AIDS is  
A reality, Say No.

Say No, Black woman

Say No

When they tell you that you are a slave, and you can't be your  
Own boss, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman

Say No

When they call a trade unionist  
A terrorist, Say No.

Say No, Black Woman

Say No

When they give you a back seat on the Liberation Wagon – Say  
No.

Yes, Black Woman – A Big NO!

## **Sibusiso**

It was the 8th of July, 2005. I woke up at about 3 a.m., put the water on the stove, and went back to bed. After 4 a.m., I woke up again and bathed. Afterwards, I woke up my sister and Irene.

I told them it was time. They were so excited! At 7 o'clock in the morning we went to Block 88 Clinic. The nurses checked me and they said something was wrong with me. They transferred me to Garankuwa Hospital. I was taken care of all through the night until Saturday.

On Sunday, at about 4:30 a.m., I was in serious pain, hoping that someone will come to my rescue. Finally, a doctor and nurse did come to my rescue. At exactly 5 a.m., I gave birth to my bundle of joy and I named her Kaparo (meaning Together), because of everything we've been through with my family – the fights and everything. I honestly thought my family would never be together again.



But after the birth of Kaparo, my family came together, celebrating her birth. And today, my family is still together. Thank God for blessing us with this child, our bundle of joy!