

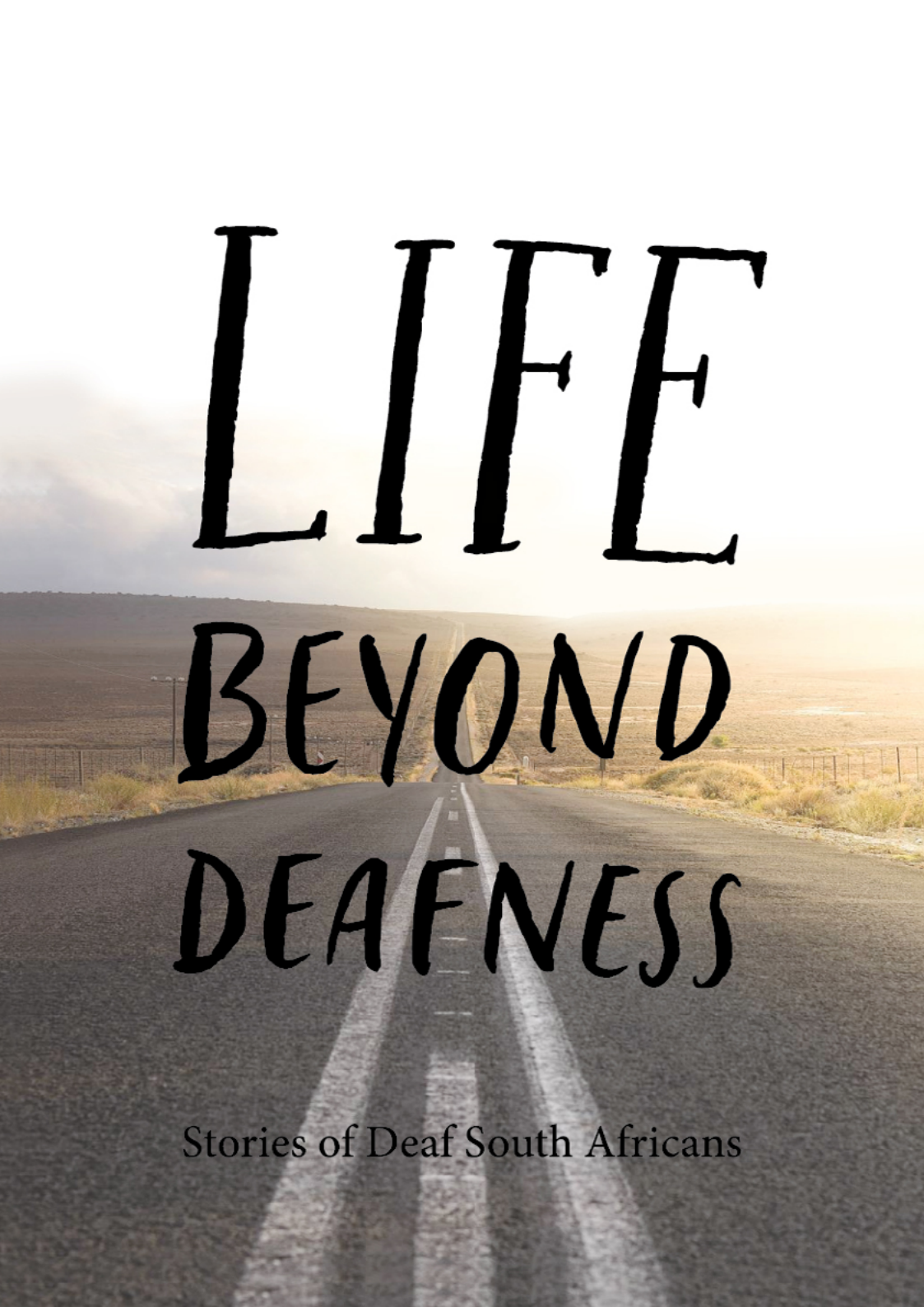
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Life beyond deafness

Various contributing authors

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LIFE
BEYOND
DEAFNESS
Stories of Deaf South Africans



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Neliswe Nzama

I was born hearing. As I grew up, I realized something was not well with me. My mom took me to a hearing school at the age of eight. The teacher was not happy with my development at school. I sat at the back of the class and could not hear anything the teacher was saying. She told me to sit in the front but I could still not listen to what she was saying. The teacher told my mom to send me to a school for the Deaf, but we did not know where to find schools for the Deaf. My family was shocked and felt terrible. They were scared for my future and did not know what would happen to me. I continued at the hearing school.

Unfortunately, my mom passed away and so my aunt took care of me. When I was thirteen years old I went to a school for the Deaf for the first time. It was a difficult time for me as I needed to learn Sign Language. Up until that time I thought there were no deaf people in the world! This was a very isolating time. I learned Sign Language but still felt like I didn't fit into the hearing world or the Deaf world. As time passed I started to feel like I was part of the Deaf world. I became proud of myself and wished my mom could see how far I had come.

Now I am part of HI HOPES. I am so excited to be a part of the programme, as a Deaf Friend, and to be able to teach families how to communicate with their deaf or hard-of-hearing children.



Pamela Mjoli

I was born in the Eastern Cape. I have two sisters, Nozipho and Philile, and a step sister called Bathobile.

When I was diagnosed deaf, my family was upset about my deafness and didn't know how to communicate with me.

Once I started school, I lived at St. Martin De Polless School for the Deaf. I stayed there from a very young age until matric. My school helped me to accept my deafness. I was taught Sign Language which helped me to learn faster.

I have memories of when my mom and I used to travel to the mall from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. My mom told me she missed me when I was at school. My mother was a good person and was very supportive. She looked after me and helped me to feel safe. She passed away and I miss her a great deal. I hope to go from strength to strength and become a better person in her memory.

I am very excited to be a part of HI HOPES and be able to teach families Sign Language. I believe that other deaf children can have close and meaningful relationships with their parents.



Deshni Pillay

I was born deaf. My parents didn't suspect anything was wrong until I turned 2 years old, when they became concerned that I couldn't talk and hear like my twin sister.

I went to a mainstream school and after a while, the principal spoke to my mum and told her that I should attend Durban School for the Hearing Impaired. It was situated in Isipingo and my parents did not know anything about that school. My mom also did not know that she needed to take me to an audiologist to get my hearing tested, or any of the other tests that needed to be done.

When I moved to the school for the Deaf, I used my hearing aid. I have been using my hearing aid since I was 7 years old. From that time, I have been able to hear and speak.

I finished matric in 2005 and started working at the school as a teacher's aide. I then began my studies and I am now a qualified teacher. I also did the training to become a Deaf Friend for HI HOPES and I enjoy having the opportunity to teach parents how to communicate with their children.

I am married and have a beautiful daughter.

Cindy Naidoo



I was born a healthy baby and the only child to my parents. Everything seemed normal until I turned 3 years old, when my parents noticed I was not responding when called, or speaking as a normal child would at age 3. They were advised to have my hearing tested and the results confirmed that I could not hear. This came as a huge shock for them and they worried what my future would be like. However, they continued to support me all through my years of growing up. My mum used to take me for speech therapy three times a week. These therapy sessions were a difficult and frustrating time for me. I'm so thankful to my mum for her patience and perseverance as this is why I can speak today. I rely on my hearing aids to hear.

I matriculated at the Durban School for the Hearing Impaired in Amazimtoti. I studied and now am a qualified Educator at the very same school. I teach SASL, English and Life Skills. I have been employed for 12 years and have an abundance of experience working with children who have a hearing disability. While growing up, I took to different hobbies. I love dancing the most and performed in many concerts and at functions. I am now married and have 2 young healthy, gorgeous boys.

All through my life nothing has stopped me from achieving my dreams and goals. I am proud to be Deaf/hard-of-hearing.

Nomkosi Mokoena



I am female and thirty years old. I was born in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. I now live in Ntuzuma. I am African and I am Deaf.

I attended V. N. Naik School for the Deaf but did not complete my matric. I left school after grade 10. I studied for my ABET Level 3 at eDeaf and achieved a Level 3 and 4 certificate in Information Technology from eDeaf too.

When I was a child, my family felt a great challenge in how to raise me. My grandmother was kind to me but the family struggled to communicate. It was my grandmother who went in search of a school for me to attend and she found Kwa Tintwa School for the Deaf. I was very excited to go to school and it was the first time I saw other deaf children. My grandmother learned some basic Sign Language so that she could communicate with me. I am very thankful to her and I also feel proud to be Deaf.

I want to tell families who have deaf babies that you can overcome the challenges that come with being deaf. When you learn some basic Signs, you will be able to relax and enjoy spending time with your baby. In time you will become proud of your deaf child.

Khabonina Madlala



I was born hearing and had already started to go to school. The school was very far away and I had to walk there and back again every day. One day, when I was six years old, I became very sick. I had a terrible headache and started vomiting. I fell into a deep sleep and my mother could not wake me. She thought I was dead and called an ambulance. The paramedics explained that I was still alive. After 4 days I woke up and I was deaf. I don't know how it happened.

My mother took me to school at Kwa Thintwa School for the Deaf. When I first arrived, I saw deaf people communicating using Sign Language for the first time. In time, I also learned Sign Language and stayed at that school until I had completed grade 10.

After grade 10 I went to Majuba College and completed my N2. I then studied for my driver's license and attained it. I am a very good driver.

I am now a Deaf Friend for HI HOPES and love having the opportunity to teach families how to Sign and communicate with their deaf or hard-of-hearing children.

Gugu Ngishiyephi Ntini



I was born Deaf in 1989. I grew up on a farm in Zwelibomvu, Mariannhill. When I was about five years old I got very sick and was in hospital for six months. It was our social worker who helped my mother realize that I am deaf.

My mother was shocked and had no idea how to find a school or communicate with me. The social worker helped find a school for me and I was put into V. N. Naik School for the Deaf.

I felt a barrier with communication. I had to use two different Sign Languages, one at school and a different one at home. It was a struggle to learn so much. I also found it a challenge to learn how to listen.

I have a hearing aid in my left ear, so I had to learn how to differentiate between sounds like a knock on the door versus a car backfiring. I did not enjoy learning to identify sounds.

Today I am a student at eDeaf. I am studying ABET Level 1, and am involved in the Deaf Friends Programme of HI HOPES. Through the programme, I gained experience as a Deaf Mentor and now I am a Deaf Friend. I love having the opportunity to teach parents and children to Sign. It is my dream to help parents and children have a wonderful, loving relationship through Sign Language.



Xoliswa Chagi

I work as a teacher's assistant at KwaThintwa School for the Deaf in Inchanga. My family and I, including my handsome sons, live in Thornwood, Pinetown. I was born deaf in Umzimkhulu. My mother told me my birth was normal and without any complications.

At the age of 8 I started to attend the Indaleni School in Richmond. My mother stayed in Thornwood for her work. When my beloved grandmother passed away I moved back to be with my mother. My mother would write down some basic words on a piece of paper and ask me to teach the family how to Sign those words, as well as the alphabet. I taught them and they were excited to learn. I was happy to be able to communicate with them.
In 1995 I moved to Fulton School for the Deaf in Gillitts. I was good at

maths. I did my grade 8 and in the middle of the year, promoted to grade 9! I stayed good at maths all through grade 9. My teacher suggested I move to grade 10 but I wanted to stay in grade 9 and learn more about technical drawing and computers.

I was a very good netball player at school. I scored the best goal for the KZN Netball team. I played against Australia in Deaf Netball while I was in matric. I was awarded honours for Technical Drawing. We had a fun matric dance.

I continued to play netball for KZN and the other provinces after school. I am a member of KZN Deaf Netball and a player for Blue Dolphin Deaf Netball team. I have refereed for Deaf Netball in KZN Schools. In June 2018, I was chosen to be the Deaf Netball coach for South Africa. I trained all the players to be extremely good at Netball, like me. I was awarded 'best teacher's assistant' at Kwa Thinwa School in 2015. I also do well in badminton, volleyball and ballroom dancing.

I am proud of who I am and what I have achieved. I have done everything that I have wanted to. I am excited to be a Netball coach, and about my work as a Deaf Friend for HI HOPES.



Bheki Richard Guliwe

I was born in 1970 in Springs, Gauteng. I was hearing and doing well in a hearing school. I was even promoted from grade 1 to grade 3! When I was 8 years old, I lost the hearing in both my ears. My teachers beat me, saying I was pretending to be deaf. The other children laughed at me. Eventually the school reported me to my family and my grandfather beat me, saying I did not want to listen. The principal of the school expelled me because he believed I was being very naughty.

One morning I woke up extremely sick and was unable to walk. My grandfather took me to the doctor and they referred me to a hospital. I was admitted for 6 months. During that time they found that I had lost the hearing in both my ears. After being discharged, I stayed home for 5 years, doing nothing. It was very painful for me to watch my younger brother and sister going to school and learning while I stayed at home with my grandparents. I was not allowed to go to school since the principal had chased me away and the other children had called me names. I cried often.

Luckily my mother found out about the school for the Deaf in Katlehong from her employer. The school didn't want to accept me because I was over 13 years old by that time, but my mother's employer begged them and eventually they agreed to give me a year. If I did not progress sufficiently in

that year, I would not be accepted back. I did very well and was promoted to the next class the following year. I was head boy at the school and after my third year there, they referred me to the Dominican School because they did not offer schooling above standard 6. After grade 11, I went on to do my N1 and N2 which I passed. At that stage, the principal said I had to leave school since I was over age.

I got a job with Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) as a Deaf Field Worker. I worked at this job for 4 years and loved it. I loved fighting for the rights of the Deaf and disabled. When my contract expired, I got a job working at the General Hospital, in the Food Service Unit. I am still working there. I have started a project where I teach the hospital staff Sign Language.

I am very happy to be a part of HI HOPES, and to have the opportunity to teach families Sign Language too!

Mandla Elias Nkabinde



My nickname is Tsikiniki. I was born in Grootvlei Farm, the last born of 4 children. I grew up in Embalenhle, Mpumalanga Province. I was born hearing and attended school with hearing people and enjoyed life as a hearing person.

When I was 12 years old I became sick for a very long time. My neck was extremely painful and I was not able to walk. I used a wheelchair for 8 months. It was during that sickness that I became deaf. I could not hear and my lips changed... they could no longer speak well.

I started attending a school for disabled children and then I went to Velaphi ABED School for the Deaf where I passed grade 10. After school I got work at DeafSA, Mpumalanga as a Social Auxiliary Worker.

I married Sonto, also a Deaf lady and God blessed us with 2 children who are also Deaf. I am happy to have a Deaf family. I got a new job at the Department of Health, as a supervisor for food services. I managed to get this job because in 2001 I did training for catering, for a year and achieved a certificate. I have also taught hearing people to become interpreters for South African Sign Language.

I am a happy, successful person. I am proud to have my own house, car and family and to have a happy life that keeps on progressing.



Freddy Sedikane

I was born deaf in Tzaneen, Limpopo, in 1980. My parents were not able to communicate with me as they did not know Sign Language.

When I was 4 years old, my father went to the hospital and they gave him some information about schools for the Deaf. My mom was my pillar of strength. She used to motivate and encourage me to take my education seriously.

When I was 5 years old, my father dropped me at the Yingisani School for the Deaf. I stayed there from grade R to grade 7. I then moved to Setotokwal Elsen Secondary School in Polokwane. I stayed there from grade 8 to grade 11.

I now work at the Kanagugu Inclusive School in Nelspruit. I am an assistant teacher for the Deaf Foundation Phase classes and I feel that my dream is coming true.

I chose to become a Deaf Friend in the HI HOPES Programme to motivate and teach parents and their deaf or hard-of-hearing children so they will have a better future. I am proud to be a part of the programme, as we help families have a close bond with their children.

Diputseng Matshee



I was born hearing and lost my hearing when I was 10 years old. That is why I can speak well.

My family did not know the cause of my hearing problems and my dad wanted to check all my other senses. He even forced me to open my mouth to check my sense of taste! He took me to see a school principal to see if the principal knew what was going on with me. The principal suggested I go to a school for the Deaf.

I also went to an audiologist at a hospital. The audiologist confirmed that I had completely lost the hearing in my one ear. I was enrolled in the school for the Deaf in Tzaneen and attended all my schooling there.

I love and appreciate my dad and my family a great deal and thank the Lord for them.

Now I am happy to be a part of HI HOPES and to have the opportunity to teach Sign Language to families who have deaf or hard-of-hearing children.

Joyce Phiri



I was born on 11 August 1975 at Nooitgedacht, Mulderdrift in Krugersdorp and I am the 4th child in a family of 5. I was raised by my mother alone. The whereabouts of my biological father was unknown at that time, he left while mom was still pregnant with me. I did have a happy childhood though.

I was a normal toddler, carefree and naughty, until at the age of 5 when disaster struck. I became sick, and was constantly in and out of hospital. My mother, as a single parent, did her best to take care of me on her meager salary as a domestic worker for Mr and Mrs Marshall. At 7 years old I was declared deaf by the doctor at Baragwanath hospital. The cause of my sudden deafness is still unknown but the doctors mentioned it might be the result of meningitis. I believe this to be the case. Despite the challenge of raising a deaf child, my mom did her best to ensure that I was never sidelined nor neglected. I stayed orally active and mostly depended on lip reading.

By 1983 Mrs Marshall decided to find me a deaf school which was based at Rustenburg. The name of the school was Kutlwanong School for the Deaf. In 1984, while my mom was preparing to take me to school, she was instructed to shave my hair and I finally arrived in January together with my mom and the Marshall family, who had kindly taken responsibility for paying my school fees.

Upon my arrival there I was totally shocked to see children talking with their hands and told my mom not to leave me with the monkeys. She responded by saying, "Awa ngwanaka bana bao ba tshwana le wena le fa o nagana ke ditshwene." (No my child those children are just like you even if you think they are monkeys).

I cried so much when they left me there, but as time passed by I learned that mom was simply trying to give me an education and to form my own language which is Sign Language.

I left school in 1991 because of financial constraints. I had completed Standard 9. The Marshalls relocated to Cape Town and we also relocated to Mpumalanga. I started working at the Department of Social Development as General Assistant in 2008 then elevated to Registry Clerk in 2010. By 2016 I was promoted to Social Auxiliary Worker after obtaining my SAW Certificate.

During my stay in Mpumalanga, I started to socialize in disability forums and continued to advocate for Deaf rights via the Deaf Provincial Council under DeafSA. By 2011 I was nominated as DeafSA MP Woman Representative until I was elevated to DeafSA National as Woman Chairperson. I was also the first Deaf person to be chosen as part of the Presidential Working Group and later, nominated as one of the South Africans to be in the World Federation of the Deaf as a Working Expert on Human Rights.

After resigning from Department of Social Development on the 6th of

June 2016, I took a short break from employment hunting. Thereafter, I was appointed as Social Auxiliary Worker at DeafSA Mpumalanga on 6th of March 2017 and enjoyed my work there. I also arranged my first Deaf Summit on the 11th of December 2018 which took place at Kwa-Mhlanga government complex. To be honest, I was so proud of all the arrangements because all the department heads attended, despite it being a short notice invitation. I was sad to leave this job on the 10th of January 2019, but wanted to pursue another job opportunity and study further to expand my knowledge.

For now I am studying to become a Human Resources Practitioner via correspondence. I also enjoy being a Deaf Friend for HI HOPES, as I have the opportunity to teach families to Sign with their children, if this is what they have chosen to do.

That is the story of my life so far, and I look forward to having more experiences and adventures for many years to come.

Vijaya Nair



My mother gave birth to me on 30 November, 1974. It was nighttime and raining heavily. My parents were so proud of me and did not know that I was deaf.

After about a year, my mom dropped a cup near me and watched me to see my reaction, but I did not react. My parents then took me to a doctor and discovered that I cannot hear. They were shocked and cried. They took me to a church for prayer and tried not to be worried for me.

My parents were anxious about how to communicate with me and where to send me to school. I was the only deaf person with many hearing people all around. When my parents heard about a school for the Deaf they took me there, and I stayed in the hostel from when I was 8 years old.

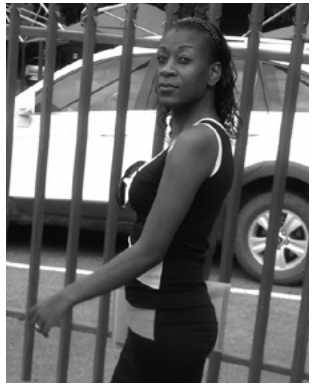
I cried. I didn't know Sign Language. After a while I made some friends and learned how to Sign. I became stronger through my friends. I ended up loving school and sports.

I finished school in 1992 and worked some small jobs until I got married to a Deaf man. When I became pregnant I was worried about the birth and how my child would be. When she was born, I was so thankful that she was perfect and hearing. My baby immediately tried to communicate with me and my husband and we taught her baby Sign Language. She loves Sign

Language and we have fun using it in the home.

I am excited to have the opportunity to teach other families how to Sign with their Deaf or hard-of-hearing babies!

Eldah (Phelonia) Nyalunga



I was born deaf. My mother would speak to me but I was quiet and would not respond. She tried again months later, but still I did not speak. Later she took me to the hospital to investigate and the doctor told her I was deaf. My mother was shocked.

When I was 5 years old I started school at Yingisani Primary School. Later I moved to a new and more caring school, Filadelfia Secondary School for the Deaf. I finished my schooling there after 5 years.

I then studied at Stanford Computer and Business College for 18 months. I finished my course there and volunteered at the Department of Basic Education. I was there for 3 and a half years until I moved to Student Universal College to attain my qualification in Early Childhood Development.

Now I am happy to be a part of HI HOPES as a Deaf Friend, where I can teach families how to communicate with their children and provide them with better opportunities for their future.

Sheilla Naingila



I was born normal and I lost my hearing at the age of 9. My mother tried to get me the best treatment by taking me to different hospitals. Unfortunately I didn't get the help I needed. She later became very sick because of stress and she died.

The doctor introduced me to a school for the Deaf where I learned South African Sign Language and completed my matric in 2012.

During my school time I really struggled to understand my family and I always felt alone while I was with them because of the lack of communication. I did not understand them and they did not understand me. Honestly, they did not know how to communicate with me at all.

Today I am a Deaf South Africa Youth representative and studying to be a teacher while working at the same time.

I am happy to be a part of HI HOPES as a Deaf Friend, so that I can help families communicate with their children in a way that I didn't have growing up.

I am proud to be who I am!

Cebisile Ndebele



I was born at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital on 16 March. My mother didn't realize that I was Deaf but a year later my grandfather noticed that I did not hear when he called my name, so my mother took me to the hospital to have a hearing test. The audiology department explained that I had been deaf from birth. My mother and older siblings started to learn basic Sign Language at the hospital in order to communicate with me, but we used Sign Language and home signs at home.

I have 2 older sisters and 1 late brother. I have been blessed with 2 young sons and a hard-of-hearing partner. They are the most important people in my life.

I attended school at Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf in Katlehong for a short period of about 6 months and then attended Sizwile School for the Deaf in Soweto. Later I also attended St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Rosebank, where I completed matric in 1999. I was the vice head girl, netball captain, awarded a bronze medal for netball for Southern Gauteng and won a silver medal for volleyball.

After I completed my matric, I attended Parktown College where I studied art and design. I completed my course in 2002 at an N5 level. I struggled to

find a job as people were not sure about hiring a Deaf person. I went back to studying and studied a short course in Skills and Study development Education. I achieved the qualification. Later I attended college campus in 2013. This is where I completed a diploma in office administration. I would like to study further to become a teacher in the future.

I worked at the Centre for Deaf Studies, doing field research for SASL from 2001-2005. I also worked at a day care centre, SABC TV License, DeafSA and Mintek. In 2011 I began working at HI HOPES and still love my work as a Deaf Mentor and now, Deaf Friend. I also freelance with Wits Language School from time to time. Recently I got a job as a Teacher's Assistant at Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf. This is a job I find fulfilling and satisfying as I help children grow and learn to be their best selves.

My achievements include being elected as chairperson for the Disabled Youth of South Africa. I lobbied for Disabled Youths to get more access to services. I was treasurer for DYSA in Gauteng. I traveled to Swaziland and Malawi for the Disabled Youth Conference, Africa. I presented a talk at the 14th Congress for the Deaf in Canada.

My greatest wish is to shine a light on Sign Language in South Africa. I wish for SASL to be the 12th official language in the country and for it to be unified. I wish for our government to consider our right for equality and continue to support HI HOPES and help deaf children learn Sign Language, to communicate with their families and have a bright future.

The Deaf can do anything except hear!

Emmanuel O Nwode



I was born in the Nduakparata village of Igveagu Izzi, Abakailika of Ebonyi State, Republic of Nigeria, on 27 August, 1976. I was the 8th of 9 children in my family and we were raised to be very religious. We lived on my parents' farm. My father was the chief of our village and my mother was hard-of-hearing. I communicated orally with her. I was born hearing and became deaf after a sickness when I was 7 years old. My brothers and sisters are all hearing. I am blessed with 2 beautiful sons, who are lovely children.

I attended a hearing school at Ndiakparata Igbeagu Primary School, in Nigeria. After I became deaf, they taught me to lipread at the same school. It impacted the development of my studies to be hard-of-hearing in a hearing school. After a year, I failed and my parents went to a centre for Deafness to gather information. Three months later, I was sent to Special Ogbiete School for the Deaf in Enugu State, Nigeria. I was 9 years old and stayed in the school hostel. I was exposed to Sign Language for the first time and became very interested in it.

After I completed my grade 12 in 1998, I attended Oyo College in the Oyo State, Nigeria, and received my diploma in 2001. I worked as a pastor at a Deaf church. I was also a businessman and owner of market operations at an oil factory. I also worked for Izzi Location Government before I started traveling at 23 years old.

My travels have taken me to Canada, various places in Nigeria and Spain. During these travels, I was given the opportunity to do work for my church and the Deaf.

My big move to South Africa was in 2004. A year later, I started a business selling electronic products. After getting into a bad fight with a thief who stole all my money, I decided to close down. I became involved in a church in Braamfontein and we were elected the best choir at DeafSA in Braamfontein. Although that church has closed down, my dream remains to win people's beautiful souls for the Lord. I worked at Makro from 2007-2010. I have also worked selling hair pieces and at McDonald's, doing maintenance.

Over the years I have learned to solve problems and this is a good attribute to have as a Deaf Mentor, which is what I am doing now. I will continue to work at HI HOPES as a Deaf Mentor, and now, Deaf Friend. It is my goal to help create a brighter future for deaf children throughout Africa. I also hope for a TV channel for Deaf viewers that would create awareness and empower the Deaf.

Daline Charmaine Maasdorp



I am 29 years old and live in Eldorado Park in the South of Johannesburg.

I was born hearing and became deaf at 8 years old. The cause of my deafness is still unknown. I grew up learning to speak and be oral on my own. My family is hearing, I am the only Deaf person.

I first went to a hearing school and then moved to St. Vincent School for the Deaf.

I am an artist. I am a professional dancer and choreographer. I have also performed with a drama group, and we travelled to schools to teach concepts through drama. I love dancing and teaching. I am also currently studying IT and will soon be finished with my courses.

I am a poet and love storytelling. So I am currently studying this at Wits University, as an undergraduate course in Arts Occupations.

I am so happy to be a part of HI HOPES, as a Deaf Friend, and to be able to teach Sign Language to families, in a fun and friendly way.

Reokopile Ramphomane



I was born deaf. I live in Soweto and I am the only Deaf child in my family. I live with my parents, older sister and nephew.

I first attended a crèche called Boitumelo's Day Care. It was a hearing crèche and I was the only Deaf child there. When I was three years old, my parents discovered that I was Deaf and I began to attend regular Speech Therapy at Baragwanath Hospital.

When I was five years old, I started school at Forest Town. It is a school for disabled children and I was not a good match. I soon moved to St. Vincent School for the Deaf and attended that school from grade R to Matric. I achieved my grade 12 in 2012.

I am currently working and studying. I am studying Early Childhood Development part-time at Intec College, while I work at St. Vincent School for the Deaf as a teaching assistant.

I have been a Deaf Mentor and am now a Deaf Friend for the HI HOPES programme and love teaching Sign Language to families, and seeing their children grow and develop. My goal is to be a qualified teacher of the Deaf, and work at a school for the Deaf. I know I can make a real difference in the lives of deaf children and their families.

Tebogo Elizabeth Sidlai



I was born on 16 July 1990 in Soweto. I grew up with my dad and brother as my mother stayed in Fourways for work. It was difficult to grow up without my mother, especially when I was young.

I became deaf from meningitis at the age of 1 year and 9 months. My mother suspected that I was deaf. She informed the nurse of her concerns about me. My mother called my father and he rushed to the hospital to verify what my mother was saying. My father could not believe that I was deaf and the doctor took me to have a hearing test. I was then officially diagnosed deaf. My mother cried and was concerned that I wouldn't have a successful future. My father comforted my mother and told her not to worry because he knew of a school for the Deaf in Rosebank, Johannesburg. My dad worked in Rivonia and passed the school each day on his way to work.

When I was 4 years old and I began school at St. Vincent's. I was very happy because I saw children using Sign Language. My father attended a Sign Language class at the school every Friday so he would be able to communicate with me.

I matriculated in 2008 and got a bursary to study a Bachelor of Administration as CIDA College. I did not pass my first year because I needed an interpreter. I then went to Action for the Blind and Disability College for

Information Technology and Architecture. I was studying architecture and working as a draftswoman in Roodepoort. Three years later, I decided to leave because I wanted to study further. I went to eDeaf to empower myself and further my studies in English. I completed levels 2, 3 and 4 ABED English. I then became a facilitator for ABED English for 2 years, and then also for Information Technology. This is what I am doing now.

My greatest goal is to become a qualified educator. I dream to become a minister for Deaf Education, in order to set a positive example for South African Deaf children. I want them to see that with determination and commitment they can achieve their goals. I would offer guidance to schools and universities about adapting their teaching for Deaf students. It is very important for quality educational institutions to offer assistance for Deaf learners, allowing them access to good education and training. This will enable them to lead good, independent and productive lives. I have a great number of ideas to help the Deaf attain a good education and would love the opportunity to implement them.

One way I am working towards achieving this goal, is through studying Early Childhood Development. I am concentrating on achieving the best possible results as I strive to become the best possible teacher I can be.

I am excited to be a Deaf Friend for HI HOPES. This is one way I know I can make a difference in the lives of Deaf children... by helping them have great relationships with their families.



Guy Mcilroy

I was born with a hearing loss that was officially picked up when I was 7 years old. The cause of my severe to profound bilateral hearing loss is unknown. My parents are hearing and my mom has recently started wearing small hearing-aids now. I am an only child, an introvert by nature and left-handed.

From 7 years onwards, I wore big over-the-ear hearing aids and went to a mainstream private school in Johannesburg. School was difficult. I battled to fit in and follow what was going on in class. I needed intensive speech therapy in the first years of school to build speech skills. During these years, I did not have any contact with deaf people nor did I see myself as a deaf person but I saw myself as 'hearing-impaired'. My goal was to be a pilot, but my hearing loss prevented that from happening. Instead, when I matriculated I went to Rhodes University to study Psychology and later I became an English teacher because of my love of reading which helped me survive schooling.

I still saw myself as a hearing person with a hearing problem. In fact, I still did the 2 years of national service in medics and became an officer. As far as I was concerned, I was not deaf! After teaching English at a public high

school for 11 years, I was struggling in class and finally conceded that I am deaf and accepted my deafness after meeting a welcoming community of deaf people at church which lead to me learning sign language there. Looking back, I wish I had learned Sign Language much earlier. Nevertheless, Sign Language changed my identity and I was ready for the move into Deaf education at the Centre for Deaf Studies, at Wits University.

I am a single father of twin (hearing) teenage girls. I am an active Deaf Mentor in the HI HOPES Early Intervention Programme at the Centre for Deaf Studies for supporting families with deaf children. I want parents to see the importance and value of early language acquisition and from meeting a Deaf person. This is what I missed out on when I was growing up. Over the years, my hearing-aids have been replaced fairly infrequently. Now I have powerful digital Oticon Domino hearing-aids with T-coils which I recently discovered be a wonderful way of coping in meetings if an interpreter is not available. This FM system helps me enormously with watching movies on TV, so I collect DVDs and blurays because the subtitles help me follow movies.

After learning sign language over the last several years, I am now comfortable taking my hearing-aids off and teaching a sign language class in SASL. Unlike when I was growing up, I am now really comfortable taking my hearing-aids off and actually enjoy the silence. I sign and I speak: I am proud of being a bilingual deaf person who lives in both worlds.

Last year, I completed a PhD in Deaf Education and am a lecturer in Deaf education at the Centre for Deaf Studies. I am also an Umalusi moderator for SASL. My academic interests are sign language, identity, deaf literature

and bilingualism. My other interests, in no particular order are: mountain-biking, cars, reading, good coffee & chocolate, writing blogs & poems, Formula 1, church (where I follow the liturgy in the prayer book) and aviation. My next project is to publish articles in journals and visit Gallaudet University in Washington. It is my dream to take my family over to Scotland to explore our Scottish roots, meet my family over there and to connect with the Deaf community over there.



Tshepiso Mdabe

I am hard-of-hearing. I use Sign Language, hearing and lipreading to communicate.

I lost my hearing when I was about 2 years old. My audiologist and mother don't really know what caused my hearing loss. I have a scar over my left eyebrow and my mom told me that I fell on the corner of the bed pedestal really hard. I think the trauma of the fall may have caused my hearing loss.

After the discovery of my hearing loss I was sent to St. Vincent School for the Deaf. I stayed in the hostel for most of my school life. I learned many things, like Maths, English, Art and many other subjects, just like in a normal school. In a school for the Deaf we don't only learn Sign Language.

Sign Language is a wonderful tool for communicating with people and to know what is going on in the world. While at school, I also participated in sports like swimming and volleyball. I participated in sports tournaments. I had a normal life in school and I still do lead a normal and fulfilling life.

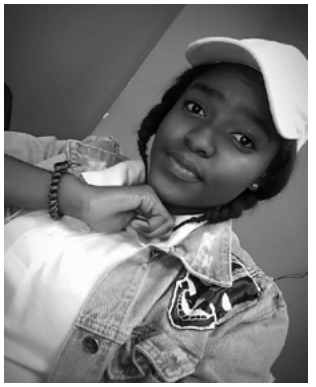
After completing matric, I did a learnership for an admin job. A few years later I started work as a Sign Language translator and also did a bit of admin work.

I am now on the path to becoming a teacher. I am doing training to teach hearing children Sign Language and aim to study further in the future. I would love to be a teacher because I want to help people gain knowledge in their lives, from what I have learned.

I am part of HI HOPES, as a Deaf Friend. I love teaching Sign Language, getting to know families and deaf babies and children and being able to help.

I love my life!

Makeni Lupita Myanga



My name is Makeni Lupita Myanga. I was born hearing at Baragwanath hospital in Soweto. When I was 2 or 3 years old I had a bad ear infection that destroyed my co-chlear and I became deaf. When my mom discovered that I was deaf, we traveled to Mexico to visit family and find hearing aids for me. Once we had found hearing aids, we returned to South Africa. By this time I was 5 years old and still stayed at home.

My mom visited MC Kharbai School and spoke to the principal about different options for schooling for deaf children. The principal gave her the contact details for St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Melrose.

I started school at St. Vincent's. In the beginning I was scared because I didn't know anyone. I learned Sign Language when I was 6 years old. My family were proud of me, and my mother fought with me when I didn't do my homework. She wanted me to be successful in life. I was at the school from grade 0 to grade 12

I failed a few subjects and re-wrote them in 2016. After that I studied at PMI (Production Management Institute). I enjoyed a year long learnership about business. I also studied in Roodepoort for a month. I am positive about my future and know that I can go far and achieve whatever I set out

to do. I have been a Deaf Mentor and also did the training to become a Deaf Friend. I am happy to be a part of the Deaf Friends Programme and teach Sign Language.



Shandre Tasneem Hendricks

My name is Shandre Tasneem Hendricks. Everyone calls me by my second name. I lived with my family in Eldorado Park until I was 19 years old. Now I stay in Mondeor. I have 2 younger sisters.

I was born deaf. When I was about a year old my mom took me to the hospital because she thought there was something wrong with me. My babbling was not as expected and I would look at people when they spoke to me and then I would walk away.

My mother took me to speech therapy for 2 years. People kept telling her I was fine but she felt frustrated with this. Then, when I was 4 years old, I was standing behind my aunt's car. She was hooting at me to get out of the way but I did not hear her. My mother then took me back to the hospital for a hearing test and I was diagnosed deaf. My mom was devastated and received counselling.

I attended nursery school at M.C. Kharbai School for the Deaf and took up speech therapy again. After 9 years I moved to St. Vincent School for the Deaf, where I attained my matric.

I worked in 2 jobs before my current employment as a Deaf Assistant in the Foundation Phase at M. C. Kharbai School. I have been working there for 16 months and enjoy my work.

I have a stable relationship with my family. I have a baby boy, born in September 2018 and love being a mommy. I'm a single mother to Asher, whose father is also Deaf. We share the load equally and support each other looking after our baby.

I'm also studying Early Childhood Development level 4 and looking forward to becoming a teacher. I enjoy being a Deaf Friend, as part of the HI HOPES Programme.

Rita Eklu



I was born hearing and became sick with meningitis when I was 7 years old. I was taken to various doctors who weren't able to help me. I lost the ability to walk, and crawled like a baby for 2 months. Eventually I learned to walk again, but lost the hearing in both my ears.

I felt hopeless and was very shy around other people. The following year I went back to school. I struggled but worked hard to pass my grades. I moved to Sizwile School for the Deaf where I learned Sign Language. I was happy because I was with people who were like me. I finished school and attended a college for disabled people, where I studied a 6 month course in computers.

At first I struggled to find work, as there was very little accessibility for a Deaf person. I attended a short business course and got a job as a cashier at Woolworths, where I worked for 5 years. I then worked in a company under Johannesburg Water, with meter boxes. After 3 years I was retrenched because of the failing economy. I found employment as an assistant teacher at St. Vincent School for the Deaf for 5 months.

I then worked at DeafSA as a social auxiliary worker while I studied a part time course in facilitation. After 2 years I attained my qualification.

I then studied the short course through HI HOPES, to become a Deaf Mentor. I am so excited and pleased to be able to help hearing parents of deaf children with communication and awareness. I am happy to be able to improve the lives of the deaf through better relationships with their families.

Zandile Vuyokazi Mazomba



I was born a hearing person on the 27th of March 1982 in the township called Mdanstane. There was a heavy rain storm outside at the time. There was no electricity where I lived and the streets were restless with people fighting over the land.

Three weeks after my birth, my grandfather died. He did not have a chance to meet me. I travelled to Cape Town from East London to attended the funeral. The journey made me feel sick but I later I recovered.

After two months I went back to East London where my grandmother took care of me while my mother was studying. We used a paraffin stove to boil water and cook meals. My mother would boil hot water and pour it into a flask to keep it warm. One day, after she had filled the flask, she did not close it properly. I accidentally kicked the flask and it fell on top of the left side of my body. My mother picked me up and immediately took my wet clothes off, but when she removed them the skin on my left arm came off with the clothes. My arm was bleeding badly and they took me to the hospital. I stayed there for almost 2 months because the skin on my arm was not recovering well. I had lots of drips into my arm and my head too. My mother could only come in to breastfeed me and was not allowed to sleep there. After I was discharged, I moved back to Cape Town to stay with my father's

grandmother because she was a nurse. I became used to travelling between both families. My mother found out that I could not hear properly when I was 10 months old, when she tried to call me many times but I didn't respond. The doctor confirmed that both my eardrums were damaged, and I had to wear 2 hearing aids.

I went to a crèche at Theodorah Bluemberg at Mdantsane at the age of 3. I then moved to Cape Town when I was 6 years old and attended Noluthando School for the Deaf where I started to develop my English language. I really enjoyed my time there and felt comfortable with other children wearing the same hearing aids I had. My hearing aids were pink. Sadly, the school closed in 1993. We had a big farewell party. I didn't realise how much I would miss the school.

In 1994 I went to College Street Primary School. I was part of their hearing classes. There were many children from different races and most of them wore hearing aids. I thought the school used Sign Language but they were focused on oral learning. I worked hard at learning English and Afrikaans at school and on weekends too. I joined different sport activities and was good at athletics and netball. All the hard-of-hearing children were forced to join the choir group. I missed the teachers when I moved on to high-school.

In 1998 I went to Baysville Secondary Special School in East London. The students there had mixed disabilities, and I struggled to fit in. I joined the sport activities and I was elected to play for Eastern Cape in athletics, netball and soccer. I travelled across the country and I brought home many gold medals. I received honours for sport and was elected as the first black

female sports woman of the year from 1998-2000. The School only went up to Grade 10, so after I completed my schooling at Baysville Special School, I went to East London College to do a Computer Course.

I moved back to Cape Town again in 2005 and was employed at Sign Language Education Development (SLED). There I learned to teach Sign Language to hearing people. I then found a job as a staff supporter at African Harvest Management Funds.

I have worked at many different places including Woolworths as a tea service assistant for 8 years. I wanted to help Deaf children improve their Sign Language and decided to study teaching at Northlink College. I am now working at Noluthando School for Deaf children.

I joined HI HOPES because I like to work with Deaf children and also to encourage hearing families to learn Sign Language to enable them to communicate better with their children and help them with their school homework.

Dominique Peterson



My name is Dominique Petersen. I am 40 years old and I am hearing impaired in both my ears. My mother became ill at the age of 20, while she was pregnant with me. Because of the illness, she lost her hearing.

I went to Dominican school for the deaf in Wittebome. I was not happy at the school because, at that time, it did not have matric. I decided to change schools, so I went to a hearing school. I sat in the front of the class and did quite well. The school I went to was Garlandale high and I matriculated from there in 1999.

I joined HI HOPES in 2018 and I enjoy going to visit families. It is so rewarding to help families and make a difference in their child's life. Within 2 to 3 weeks of teaching Sign Language I can normally see the improvement in communication between parents and children.

In 2018 I had 7 HI HOPES families to visit. Most of their children started attending the Dominican school. I currently have 3 families that I visit and I greatly enjoy it.

I have decided that I would like to study further, so I have been accepted to start an ECD program on 1 April and work as a teacher assistant at Dominican school for the Deaf. I'm so happy to be teaching at the school I attended when I was a little girl.