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21st Century

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SOUTH AFRICA : MY DREAMS ARE HUGE – DISABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA
(TRT 18'12 »)

INTRO

For South Africans with disabilities, achieving success and fulfilment can be a daunting prospect. But does that mean you can't dream big?

TITLE SLATE:

MY DREAMS ARE HUGE: DISABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

TEXT ON SCREEN:

"Love Letter to Myself"

EDDIE AT HOME IN
WHEELCHAIR, READING
LOVE LETTER

SITTING ON BALCONY WITH
TINO

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

"Love Letter to myself. Isn't incredible? You have outlived yourself. Twenty years ago medical experts told your mother that due to spinal muscular atrophy you would not live past your fifth birthday. You feel guilty because you have left folks behind. You have left millions of disabled twenty-somethings, scattered throughout the global south, behind. In some ways they are like you – young, black,

JOHANNESBURG CITY
CENTRE

TEXT ON SCREEN:

Johannesburg, South Africa

profoundly disabled – but in many ways they are not like you. You live a life they can barely imagine. Unlike you, they are locked up in the back rooms of grim nursing homes, made to disappear from public view and are neglected and ill-treated by society and the state.” (53”)

TEXT ON SCREEN:

Finetown, near Johannesburg

TOWNSHIP STREET SCENES

NTSWAKI WORKING ON
JEWELRY

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (In Sotho)

“I want to have something of my own – preferably my own business. I want to learn more about jewellery so I can teach others – even those who aren’t disabled. So they can see we can do this, despite our disabilities. My name’s Ntswaki Tsoliwe. (How old are you?) 31.” (40”)

TEXT ON SCREEN:

Ntswaki has cerebral palsy

NTSWAKI WALKING ALONE

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

EDDIE IN CAR ON WAY TO
WORK WITH TINO

TEXT ON SCREEN:

Eddie Ndopu, 25 years old

“My name is Edward Ndopu. I go by Eddie though. And I am the head of Amnesty International’s Youth Engagement programme for Africa. My dreams are huge. The kind of life that I seek to live is on an epic scale and really big. And I think there’s a reason for that. I think because I know that I’m dying. I know, because I have a degenerative disability and because I know the older I get the weaker I become, there’s an urgency at the back of my mind. And because of that urgency I don’t have time to play small. ” (42”)

EDDIE AT WORK (AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL OFFICE)

EDDIE IN CAR ON WAY TO WORK

"I insist on moving around because I don't think we can really talk about freedom of movement if we don't accord that to people who have issues with mobility." (15")

EDDIE AT WORK JOKING WITH COLLEAGUE

"We're like – we're a mean team. (You know we are connected). Yeah, on a deep level. You look beautiful." (8")

EDDIE AT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

"My work is mainly with young people – finding out what young people's perspectives are on human rights abuses and violations throughout Africa. I think that the vast majority of people with disabilities in South Africa are incredibly disenfranchised, to the point of being invisible.

STREET SCENES, TOWNSHIP WITH NTSWAKI

People with disabilities disappear into the background. We don't see them. We don't hear from them. There's already overwhelming poverty and overwhelming inequality and unemployment in South Africa, for your non-disabled person. But for disabled South Africans it's compounded by the anti-disability society in which we live – which is not just a South African problem but I would argue a global problem." (60")

NTSWAKI WALKING ON STREET WITH COUSIN

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (In Sotho)

"On the street people feel pity for me. They say 'Why is it so difficult to walk? What caused this?' I don't respond because I understand

NTSWAKI PAINTING HOUSE
WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF
NGO

this is how God made me. I didn't cause this condition.

*I paint houses purple to show support for people like me. We also need people to support us. Just like we support each other.”
(38”)*

JEAN ON CAMERA

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

SUPER:

Jean Elphick, Afrika Tikkun

“Ntswaki was one of the founding members of a self-help group for caregivers of children with disabilities. So Ntswaki attended with her mother. My name’s Jean Elphick. I work for Africka Tikkun and I run the empowerment programme within Afrika Tikkun. Afrika Tikkun is quite a big South African NGO and we’re really focused on children.” (28”)

NTSWAKI ARRIVING AT
AFRIKA TIKKUN CENTRE
WITH SELF-HELP GROUP AT
CENTRE

SOT SINGING

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (English)

NTSWAKI BEING ASKED
QUESTIONS FOR
QUESTIONNAIRE AT NGO
CENTRE

“(Do you feel lonely or empty? Do you have some support from your family members? I have lots of help from my family, from my aunt and my cousin.

*(Do you feel ashamed of your disability, or you are not ashamed of it?) No, I’m proud of it.”
(26”)*

EDDIE AT SWIMMING POOL
WITH TINO

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

“I get that everybody –we’re all in the process

of dying, but for me it feels more real and evident because my body communicates with me every day. I feel weaker. I have shortness of breath sometimes and that's why, with the energy that I have, I want to use it in the best way I possibly can. (40")

NATSOT

*That was so good! Yes! That was so good.”
(3")*

EDDIE DELIVERS POEM AT
INAUGURATION OF
AFRICAN LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

“I am handsome because of my crooked hands and my crooked back. (5")

EDDIE GRADUATION PHOTO

Schools rejected you time and time again. It was said that you would never cut it in the formal education system. (8")

In my mind I reject the hells of incapacitation for a world of boundless mobility. (8")

So when I was sixteen years old my Mum came home one afternoon and she brought with her a magazine and snap bang in the middle was a feature on this new school, the African Leadership Academy. (15")

The poem was part of the grand opening of the Academy. (6")

I am free. In my mind, the possibilities are

endless. ” (7”)

SCHOOL WITH DISABLED
CHILD – PLAYING SPORTS
AND GAMES OUTSIDE

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

“South Africa is really heralded as having a fantastic legislation, a really strong constitution, which really pushes human rights.

CHILDREN IN CLASSROOM

Unfortunately however, more than two decades on, there’s been a real lag in implementation of these fantastic policies. (20”)

SCHOOL CHILDREN ARRIVING
AND SINGING AT SCHOOL
ASSEMBLY AND IN CLASS

No one really knows exactly how many children with disabilities are not going to school on the grounds of having a disability, but our state estimates are almost six hundred thousand children.” (12”)

Text on Screen:

Jean Elphick was lead researcher for a UNICEF report on access to education for children with disability

“As persons with disability we have fewer chances of obtaining a job, receiving education or accessing basic public services” (19”)

Catalina Devandas-Aguilar,
United Nations Special
Rapporteur on the rights of
persons with disabilities

“Moreover, we are more likely to be victims of violence, in all

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

its manifestations”

PHOTOS OF NTSWAKI AND
OTHER MEMBERS OF NGO

“And finally there is huge problems with accessing justice and in South Africa we have a big problem with gender-based violence. People with disabilities are far more vulnerable and likely to experience abuse.” (16”)

PHOTOS OF NTSWAKI

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (In Sotho)

“My cousin and his friend came over to visit. My cousin left and went to the shops. Then his friend pulled me down. I fell and he started raping me. I decided to go to the police station, but my cousin called to say ‘don’t go’. He said he would handle the situation. But I said to him - ‘No - this is my body.’” (40”)

PHOTOS OF NTSWAKI

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

“When we realized that Ntswaki had reported the case and it didn’t appear that anything had happened, we referred Ntswaki to a public interest attorney. Whilst this was all going on, the family of the perpetrator was trying very hard to bribe Ntswaki’s family to drop the charges. They offered a washing-machine in return for dropping the charges. A plea-bargain was offered to the perpetrator, who agreed to plead guilty to the charge of sexual assault and he was given a five-year suspended sentence which means that he went home and he didn’t serve any jail time.” (44”)

NTSWAKI ON CAMERA

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (In Sotho)

NTSWAKI AT HOME LOCKING
DOOR, IN KITCHEN
WITH FAMILY

“It caused me so much pain when I saw that guy was not in jail. Now I’m afraid to go outside and I always lock the door. I want to say that we disabled people are human beings just like everyone else. We get raped just like other people. I want people to stop these assaults. And I want those who are raped to speak up and not stay silent.” (40”)

EDDIE AT HOME WITH TINO
AND MOTHER LOOKING AT
PHOTOS

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

“I live here with my Mum and my brother when he’s not at university. It’s home. (5”)

(Mother: “I’m getting sweaty. I get emotional.”)

This is not what I came from. Oh my God I’ve always been a diva! My God. Look at myself, look at the teeth. (9”)

(Mother: “Give me tissues. We’ve come a long way.”) Yeah. We have. (8”)

EDDIE AND TINO GO TO
RESTAURANT AND MEET
FRIENDS

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

“So we know how to make buildings accessible, but people with disabilities also need access to things that are somewhat, not very tangible – like love, and intimacy and joy. (12”)

Sex is a human activity that everybody – most

people – engage in. It’s a right – a human right. I’m gay too – I’m queer – and so it’s difficult, it’s hard but I think that there are ways that we can fulfil that, for people with disabilities.” (19”)

“Simpfiwe Dana is a very good friend of mine and somebody who I adore. (5”)

EDDIE AND TINO MEET
SINGER/SONGWRITER
SIMPFIWE DAN AT
RESTAURANT

NATSOT

You look absolutely amazing, hello! (3”)

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

Her music is incredibly soulful, she’s got lots of politically conscious stuff that she puts out there. And so she was an Amnesty International Ambassador. So we met to catch up, one, as friends, but also to discuss future collaboration. (21”)

SUPER:

Simpfiwe Dana,
Singer/songwriter

EDDIE ON CAMERA

If you wouldn’t mind writing the song? And the thing is to get something that is – that has got a human rights messaging, but even beyond that, something that is also up-tempo as well. (17”)

In a nice way I ambush people and get them to do projects. That’s how I get them to commit.” (7”)

SEXUALITY AND LIFE SKILLS
CLASS WITH NTSWAKI AND
SCHOOL STUDENTS

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

“Inspired by our negative experience of supporting Ntswaki through the investigation

and the court process, we really redoubled our efforts to looking at empowering young people with disabilities to prevent abuse in the first place. (17”)

(Boy: “It’s a penis.”)

What we are experimenting with, and what we’re really giving a try, is rolling out a peer education sexuality, life skills and HIV course.” (10”)

NTSWAKI GIVE GIFT TO
JEAN

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (English)

“I give you this thing.” (3”)

VARIOUS OF NTSWAKIN
INTERACTING WITH
MEMBERS OF NGO

JEAN ELPHICK: (In English)

“She is an extremely resilient person and she really is a valuable member of our self-help group. She adds so much of her character and her humour to our group – and at times her sarcasm. But she is a very lively and extremely positive person.” (22”)

EDDIE AND TINO OUT
TOGETHER IN THE PARK
AND SITTING NEXT TO LAKE

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

“Tino is my rock. I don’t think I can do what I’m doing without him. He’s the person I spend the most time with, out of anybody, in my life. And he keeps me together. (17”)

SUPER:

Tino Nene, Full-time assistant

If we look at society it is made to help able-bodied people. Everything about the built environment is structured because somebody

assumes a certain body. And this body stands and walks, and sees and hears. This is why I say that independence doesn't exist. What does exist is inter-dependence. We all need each other to survive. We all do." (30")

NTWAKI SITTING IN GARDEN
AT HOME, PLAYING WITH
CHILDREN

NTSWAKI TSOLIWE: (In Sotho)

"I want to say that people with disabilities are human just like everyone else. We are all the same. The only difference is that I need help walking and other people don't." (16")

EDDIE ON CAMERA AND AT
LAKE

EDDIE NDOPU: (In English)

"I want to leave the planet in a blaze of glory. I want to go out like a firework. My body may have deteriorated over the years and may have decayed. But my spirit is everlasting and will continue to reverberate long after I've left the earth." (22")

TEXT ON SCREEN:

The UN works to combat inequality and to promote the inclusion of people with disability based on The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal Number Ten: '

(icon) 10 Reduced Inequalities.'

(10")