

on transit for justice

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On the 6th of June 2006 almost three years ago I discovered that I was HIV positive. I was for the first time permanently lost for words, but at least I was finally at peace with why I was dismissed from DHL International a courier company based in Isando few months earlier due to an unknown illness, it was ?HIV? my CD4 count was less than 280 I was constantly sick I was coughing blood, losing weight, and fatigue was kicking in, I was emotionally and intellectually incapacitated, but unlike millions I had a chance to change my life and turn things around for better. I must admit it was difficult at first, but I knew the truth and I was in liberty to make right decisions especially a crucial decision to live and appreciate every second with humbleness and courage. I am writing this on behalf of my dear friends one moment they were here now rampaged by AIDS, furthermore in the memory and remarkable legacy of Simon Tseko Nkoli; who through sacrifice of life and dignity, vowed to protect and die for the rights of the minority and the voiceless that he represented with courage sometimes under trying circumstances in public forums where he spoke with conviction as a leader. I! as a young black HIV positive gay man who happens to be South African and a global citizen I fully identify with Simons legacy hence scepticism or fear could not deter me in writing this letter or in beginning this pivotal national dialogue. Simons legacy must be protected through constructive, sharp, fresh and cutting edge rhetoric in our new expanded collective efforts specifically on AIDS related issues and other socio developmental issues that affect the decaying of the legacy left by leaders like Simon who believed in the ideals of a free and a just society where everyone is equal and protected by all organs of government and society that have been mandated with that obligation. I am writing this to remind government especially The Department of Trade and Industry (the dti) that is the prerogative of government to set precedence and to be a shining example in upholding the rights and human dignity of all persons including those that have AIDS. I am writing this on behalf of the cleaners and the tea lady?s who confined in me. They who have been forced driven by fear to live a life of secrecy, one day they will also accept a difficult calling to speak and they will come out and say, we are tired of lies and fear in this big dark whole where we are dying alone in silence ?we are also HIV positive?. The core of my person would not permit me to allow what happened and what continues to happen at the dti happen to them. Almost three years later I left the dti I made a decision to reclaim my life and embrace the activist in me; I needed to make it very clear that, I am no one?s tragedy, I am a son of a woman, a brother to a sister, a neighbor to a young man who died from AIDS, a friend of a woman who wakes up every morning to sell veggies on the street corners of Hillbrow to support herself and her daughter because her husband died from AIDS, I am a son of a woman who?s life is rooted deep in pain and suffering. I left the dti not because I was weak my decision was influenced by the animalistic and inhuman treatment that I received from some individuals within the organization encouraged by management through ignorance and arrogance during this difficult times of disease, poverty, and a growing scourge of brother to brother hatred. I was treated like a second class citizen in my own country my basic rights and my human dignity were undermined. They without remorse or sympathy: Told me not to drink from the same cup with them. Eat from the same spoon with them. Go to the same bathroom with them. When I applied for a position that I was acting on my manager was instructed to throw my CV in a bin, to shred it, to throw it to the nearest hell because, I have AIDS and I deserved nothing better, when I came out to them they made a mockery of my status and my pain they compared it to lots things like finger cancer ?chop chop its gone?, or a car accident ultimately they decided to tell others about my status without my consent, at the dti. These are but a few controversial reasons that influenced my decision to resign from the organization in the morning of the 26th of August 2008. I feel today as I felt in the midst of this tragedy that someone must speak out. Someone must condemn vehemently and coherently this radical and dangerous behavior blazing with fires of discrimination and hatred because

it did not begin with me and it won't end with me. Having shared this with you on a blank paper I would like to further emphasize that it is my believe that the dti engineered my demise through managers who by malicious acts of hatred have created an environment that gave even junior staff members power and ammunition to discriminate and loath without fear and remorse. Albeit I am glad that this is not my legacy; I just like Simon chose not remain defunct and disgruntled. I made history for being the first person to declare publicly his status at the dti; none the less I remained as I am today appalled that this was happening within the government corridors, politically led organs of a society that is in shock day in, day out ?when dying mothers weep as they give birth to dying orphans.? The truth is I don't want to die with untold stories I don't want history to judge me because, just like Simon of the Delmas Treason Trial I have given myself entirely to the course I swallowed my pride, sacrificed my privacy, dignity, freedom I was consumed with hope, faith, responsibility and choice; I accepted doubtlessly and selflessly a calling to speak on the 1st of December 2006 when, I declared my status to all of them. Most of you will probably ask why is he doing this now more than two years later? I am writing this letter because I believe that ?Justice? is a birth right a privilege that all persons even those with AIDS must enjoy in our beautiful democracy. I want to condemn as rubbish a perception that declaring your status automatically turns one into a victim, a subhuman whose mere existence is reliant on pity, handouts and remorse; therefore we do not deserve of anything more or anything better because we are the ?victims of our own doings?. I am a young model citizen with written dreams, hungry to write history. I will not let any soul summarize my dreams or write my history and tell my stories on my behalf. ?I have AIDS and I am in control.? This is my final declaration to you as I am on transit seeking Justice that I have been denied for the past two years. Let me round it off by quoting Kofi Anan ?We must stop fueling an ?us/them? mentality in which the uninfected deny the existence, the human value and the dignity of the infected. ? Kabelo Lechoba

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