

Héritier LENA



Bio details



Born: Kinshasa (DRC) in 1982
Arrived in Yeoville: 2005
Profession: Shop owner



Born: Eastern Cape (South Africa) in 1975
Date arrived in Yeoville: 2004
Profession: Nurse



Family status: Engaged, one child
Met : At Hillbrow Hospital in 2006
Live: Berea, 3-bedrooms flat (2 rooms are sublet), shop on the ground floor of the building.



"This photo shows my success in South Africa and in Joburg. I moved from being a security guard to a businessman, with the support of my beautiful nurse wife."

Finances and decisions

"I play a big role in decision making. It's obvious, I'm a man and I'm the man in the house. Since we met in 2006, I was the one who was providing and at that time she was not working. She only got a nursing job in 2009 after our child was born. So, financially, I was in charge of everything with my security guard job. But when she got a job, we put the money together and we started this business. That's where I stopped the security job. Though I am the one who have the last word, we do discuss things, like before buying this car, to renew our furniture and appliance. We have a common bank account, but all the domestic expenses, including the rent are in my wife's attribution. At the end of the month she collects money from other occupiers and makes sure the rent is paid on time and in the due date."

Overcoming challenges

"We are human beings, I can't say that we don't have problems, but they are minor problems. She can cause problems and I can cause problems. Like when I want food and she says 'no, you can make it your self I'm tired', I get angry and we have an argument. I know I'm a bit strict. It was a time when we newly opened the shop she needed money and I refused to give her money, she called the police saying that I should give her access to house finance because the shop is the effort of both of us. They arrested me, but they released me the following day. Since then we have a joint bank account and we both contribute. Otherwise, we are matured people and we solve our problems responsibly."

The future

We are mostly focusing on our future. I must get money to finish the *lobola* and get marriage. We already have one boy, another one is coming because she is pregnant now. So, we are settling and building our life together.

"I was in Hillbrow hospital, I was bleeding and not one nurse would even approach me. She went to see them and pleaded them to attend to me. Then she waited for me."

How we met

"I met Thumi at Hillbrow hospital. I had been attacked by tsotsis on my way to work. At that time I was a security guard. Then when I got into the hospital, the queue was long. Thumi was treated before me. When she came out, I was still standing in the queue unattended and I was bleeding. All the nurses were there and no one could even approach me. She went to them and pleaded them to attend to me. When I came out, I saw her sitting there, I didn't know that she had been waiting for me. I went to her and thanked her. We started walking together chatting. She was staying in Berea. While we were walking, I told her to come with me to my place. She hesitated, but I convinced her. She was beautiful. When we got into my place in Yeoville (I was sharing the room with two other friends), they were surprised to see me with a beautiful lady and they were calling her 'Mundele' (White) because of her skin complexion. The very same day I told her I loved her. I didn't want it to be a boyfriend-girlfriend game, I was serious and thinking of marriage. Since that time we started dating and visiting each other."

How it became serious

"I told her that I wanted to meet with her parents. In 2008 we organized a trip to her home, in the Eastern Cape, to meet her parents and formalize our relationship. I was accompanied by one of my friends who played the role of Uncle to my in-laws. When we came back from the Eastern Cape, we decided to stay together and in 2009 our boy child Rigobert was born."

How our families & communities reacted

"Her parents welcomed us very well. The only thing is to finish paying off the *lobola*, I have already paid something. Afterward, we'll organize the wedding. Her family members visit us a lot, especially her younger sister. And my family knows her, we've sent the photos. My people often call us. I don't have time to sit there and teach her Lingala or French, but I want her to learn my language. I don't want to translate her phone calls from Congo. So, I take her to this Congolese church in Berea, where we have a Congolese pastor, so that she can learn faster. There are things, if I don't understand, I ask for an explanation. Sometimes I also tell her about my likes and dislikes. In the beginning it was difficult because she'd wear these small clothes that expose her body, you see. Congolese would look at her like a prostitute. So I explained her and now she knows. And she was complaining, that I impose things and I'm too strict."

Thumi's say

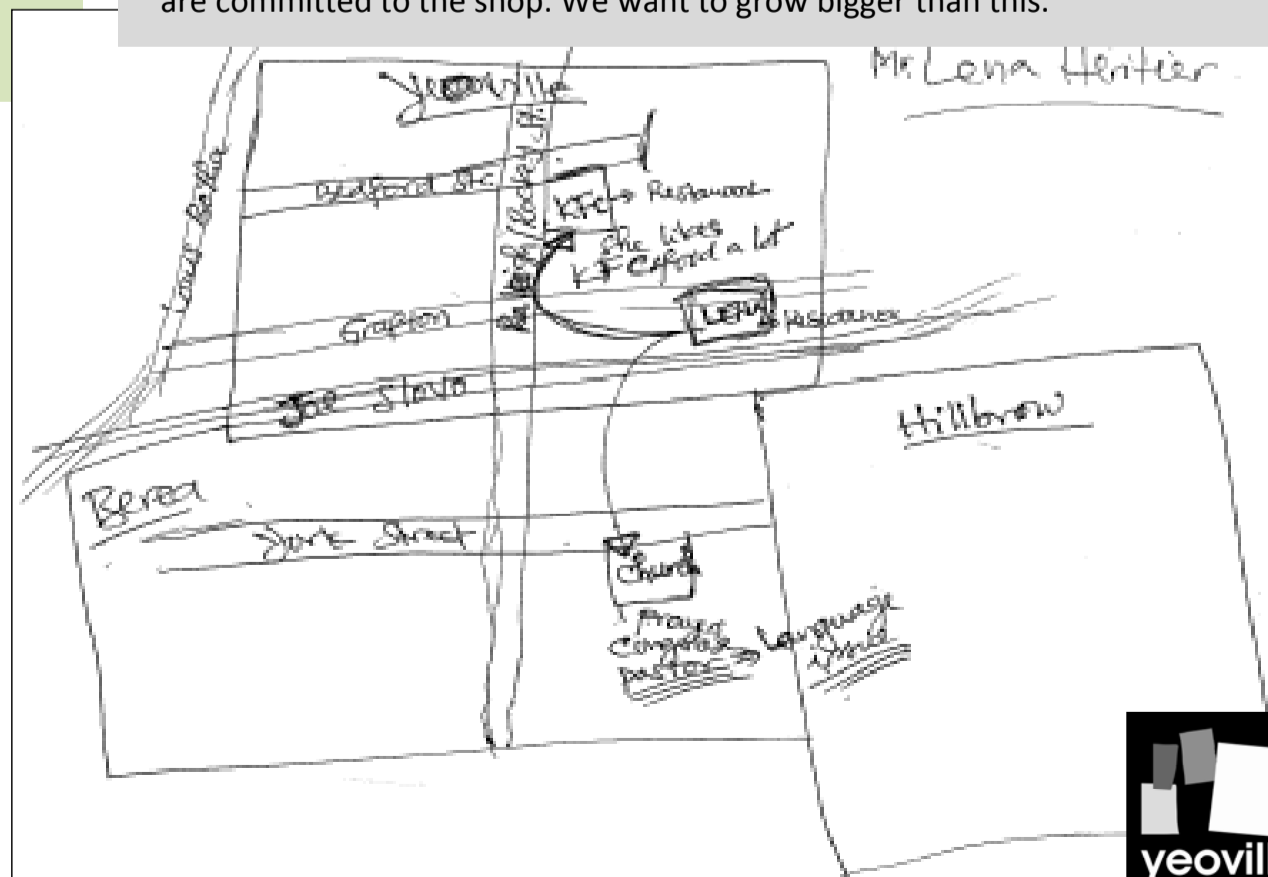
"I don't like these Congolese women who come here to the shop and start speaking Lingala with 'their brother Heritier', and calling me names, 'Mundele', which means 'white' and 'Munene', which means 'a big, fat woman'. Where were they when I started with Heritier? I've never seen them before. Do they follow Heritier now because he has money and is owning a shop?"

"In our spaza shop while helping a client. My wife is a nurse, she is always selling in the shop when she's back from work or when she's off."



Our places (in & out of Yeoville)

"We only have two places: KFC in Yeoville because she likes that cuisine very much and the church in Berea on York Street. Otherwise, she was either at my place or I was at her place when we were living separately before 2008. And now with this shop, there's no time to go out because we are committed to the shop. We want to grow bigger than this."



*Jennifer Zuma



Bio details



Born: Newcastle (KZN) in 1987
Arrived in Yeoville: 2007
Profession: Hair dresser (Yeoville)



Born: Katanga (DRC) in 1984
Date arrived in Yeoville: 2005
Profession: Shop owner (Yeoville)



Family status: Living together, one child
Met: Shoprite Housing wall, in 2008
Live: in Yeoville, in a room (share the flat with other subtenants)

A new life

“At the guest house, we were five girls in a room, and when one had a client we could not enter the room, we could not rest, we had to wait. Here in my room, with Etienne and our child, I feel at home, it is our place, I take good care of it. The only downside of sharing with other people is when sometimes my younger brother comes to visit, I have to negotiate with the other tenants for him to stay.”

“It just happened. I started falling in love with him, just for what he was doing to me and his behaviour that day.”

How we met

“When I came to Jozi from KZN, I went to Yeoville, as that’s where I could easily connect with people, given that most of people are migrants here. I spent three months in a guest house as a sex worker. After these three months, I had some cash, then I decided to get out of that place to become respectable and start a good life. Even when I was in that guest house, I was walking around to ask if I could get something to do. Remember that sex workers are mostly busy afternoons and in the evenings. So I was using the day to search for jobs. Then I came across this hair salon in Yeoville. I begged the lady there to help me get out of that job that was making me ashamed. The lady saw I was serious and gave me the job. The same day I went to Shoprite [to the housing adverts wall] to look for accommodation. There was a group of men there and they greeted me: ‘You are beautiful, hey!’ I took it personally as an insult because I was planning to get out of my prostitution life, and I got very cross. But I was surprised that he was speaking softly, cooling me down with lots of ‘sorry’. Then Etienne said that he could help me find a better place. They took me to a flat and told me I would share the room with a Congolese woman, and for the rent Etienne said “give whatever you have, I will pay the rest”. Then he asked if they could help me with transport for my stuff. I felt ashamed to take them to the guest house and I said no, but afterwards I realised I needed that help and called Etienne. He came and I explained him everything. He promised that he will stand to help me; he said that I mustn’t worry and he will be supportive. He also told me that I should leave all this behind as the experience of my past. Then we went to the place and he said, ‘Welcome home and feel at home’. It was so touching, I just said thank you, I smiled and tears came out.”

How it became serious

“I can’t explain why I decided to disclose my life to him. It just happened. It was like another force within me. Even if he had not said anything romantic or about love I started falling in love with him, just for what he was doing to me and his behaviour that day. To tell the truth, I am the one who pushed things. I didn’t even bother to wait for him to tell me that he loved me, but I told him that he was sweet. The next time we met I kissed him. I told him I loved him more than anything. Some months later, in 2009, he suggested that we could stay together.”

Finances and decisions

“We’re Africans, it’s obvious that the man is the head of the household and he is the main provider. I support when needed and manage the place.”

Overcoming challenges

“We never really faced or experienced a big problem in our relationship. I accomplish my duties as a woman before I go to work to avoid putting him in a situation where he will complain of something. He also tried his best to make me feel happy and comfortable. I think Congolese are just nice people.”

How our families & communities reacted

“In July 2009 I became pregnant. He planned to send me home [Newcastle] to see my parents and ask about that situation. I refused. I told him that I will go there when I give birth. When I gave birth in March 2010 we organized a trip to KZN to see my parents, but not for *lobola* or marriage. My parents are happy as long as I am safe with my man and alive. The most important thing is that my parents know Etienne and whenever he will be ready for *lobola* he will pay. His family doesn’t have a problem. They love me and I love them also.”

Our places in & out of Yeoville

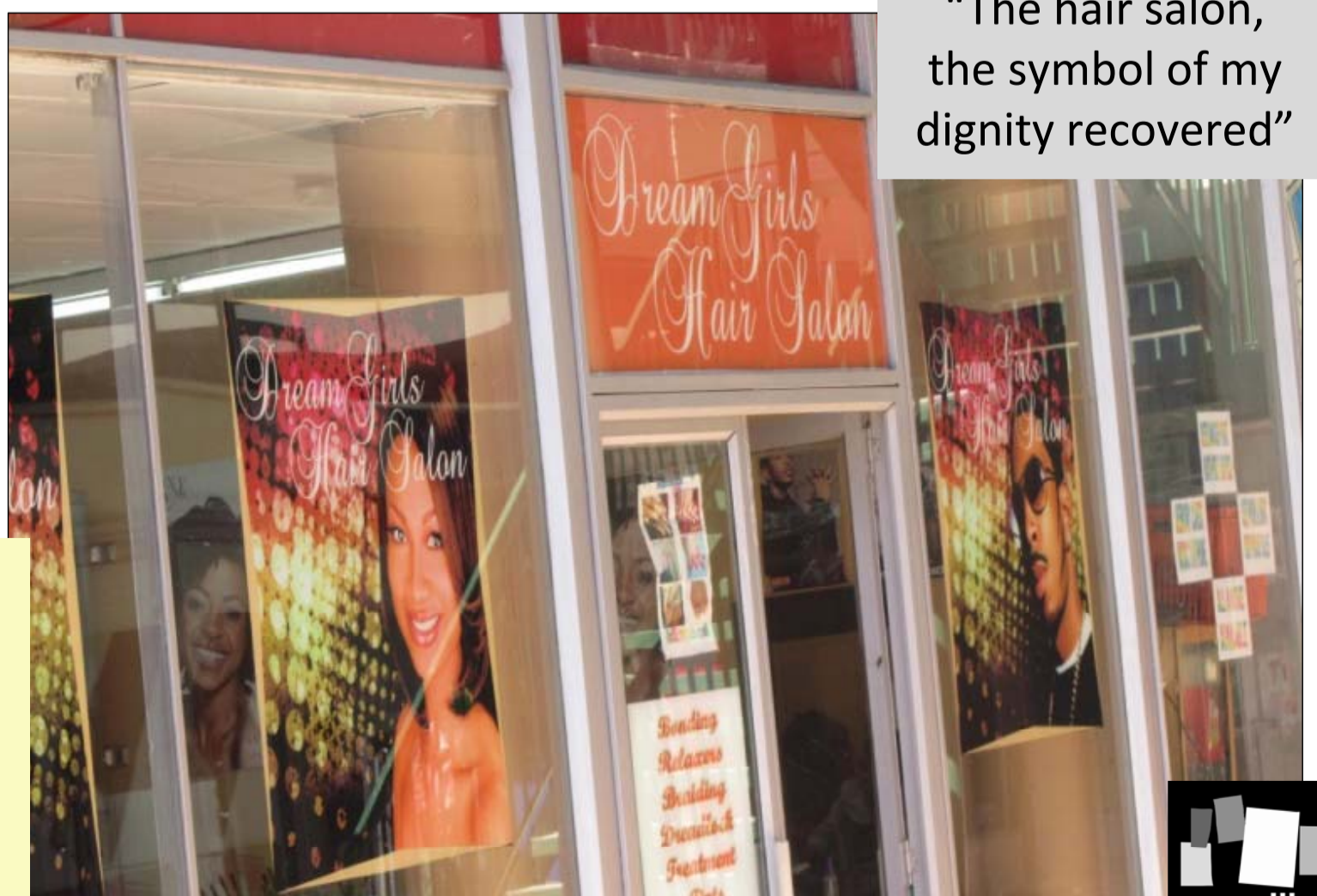
“Before we had our child we used to go out a lot especially to Congolese night clubs, but now we go to the malls on special occasions.”

Going out together in Yeoville

“The first day we met, because I was so upset, he said he’d take me to a place where I would not be disturbed. We went to the corner of Bedford Street and Louis Botha. We ordered drinks and food. The place was just cool with nice music. It looked like a restaurant combined with a bar.

After eating and while we were drinking he invited me to dance with him. I told him that he was sweet.”

“The hair salon, the symbol of my dignity recovered”



Jean Ngombo



Bio details



Born: Mbuji Mayi (DRC) in 1988
Arrived in Yeoville: 2010
Profession: Security guard (Fourways)



Born: in Botswana in 1986
Date arrived in Yeoville: 2008
Profession: Cleaner (in town)



Family status: Dating
Met : At Hillbrow park in February 2011
Live: Yeoville in a room (him);
Downtown with her two aunties (her) .

Cultures

“When she came to my place the first time, she insisted on cooking. But I did not appreciate the food because she does not know how to cook. I ate the food to please her. Since that time, I told her to stop cooking as she does not know how to cook, but she likes the food that I cook.”

Our future

“Lindi gives me lots of love. She teaches me how to love. She wants marriage. We love each other but I'm still young for marriage. I haven't planned for it yet. ”

“In Congo, you know, when you cruise or you are after a girl, she cannot hug or kiss you first, before you convince her or agree on the relationship.”

How our families/ communities reacted

“The first time, she wanted to stay the whole night; I refused because I live with my older brother. I respect him a lot. It is not good that he finds me with a woman in the room. That is not polite. I tried to hide it from him, but she was calling all the time, and once she came in our flat unexpected. I then had to introduce her to my brother, and he got very angry: ‘You came here to study, now you waste your time with whores’. I started fighting with him. He told our parents in DRC. My parents are Jehovah Witnesses, they do not approve of our relationship. They now even gave me a nickname, ‘Champion’, meaning Womanizer. Since then, I’ve left the flat and my brother, and I am free to see her. But this pressure is weighing on me. My parents said, ‘now that you are a grown up, you don’t need our financial support’. Me, I don’t even call them anymore. Fortunately I have a job now. I introduced Lindi to my friends. I know her aunties, she lives with them in town. The aunties appreciate me a lot, they call me their ‘in-law’ already.”

How we met

“I met her at Hillbrow Park in February this year 2011. It was a Sunday, I was accompanied by my friends. She was walking in front of us in the same direction. I followed her, I introduced myself. I told her that I don’t speak English very well, but I am learning. But Lindi said there was no problem because one learns by speaking. I asked her if she would help me improve my English, I insisted, and she gave me her phone number. In the evening that same day I called her to make sure her number could go through. I set up an appointment for the following day.”

How it became serious

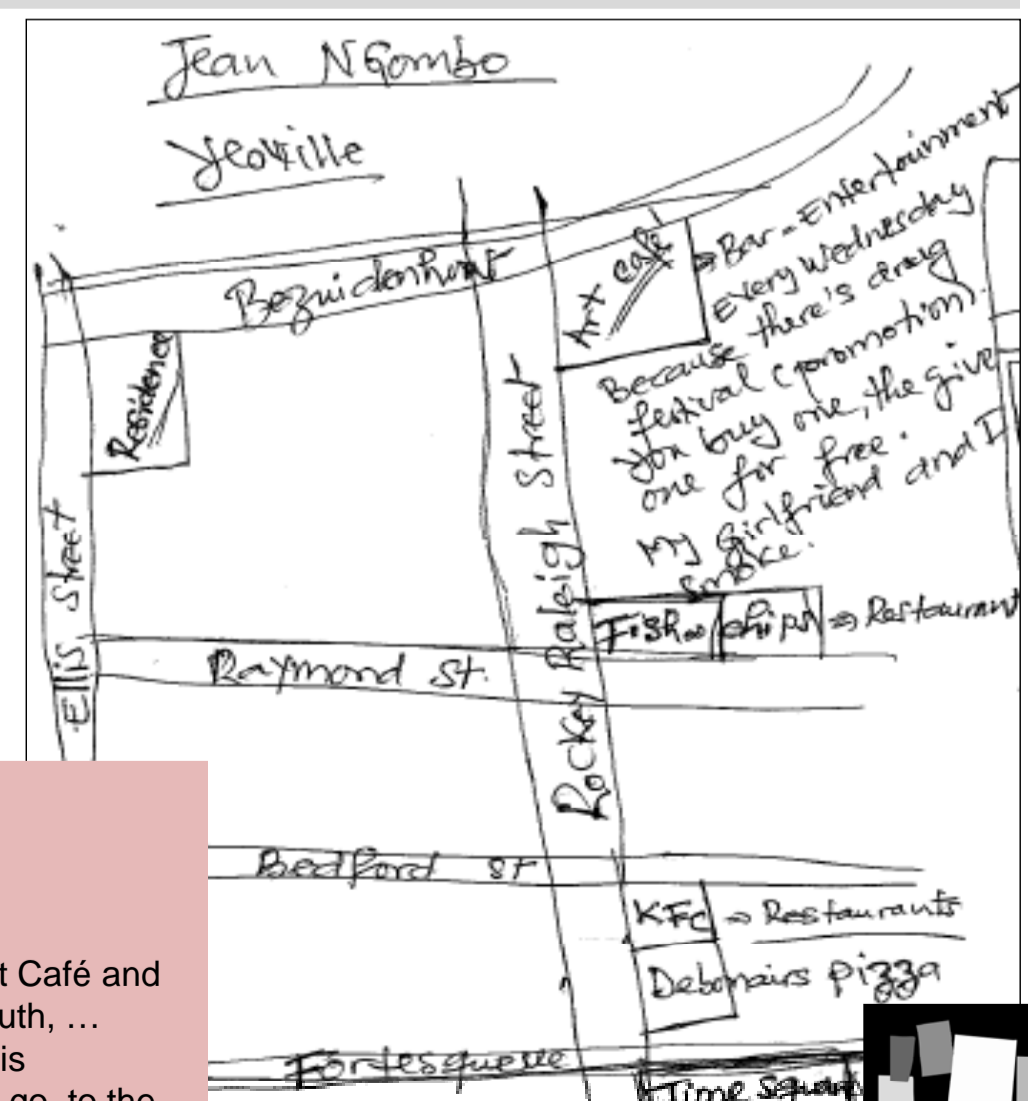
“We then met in the Yeoville Park around 11h00. I never expected what she did. She hugged and kissed me. I was surprised. I found it totally different from my country. I was impressed and had to impress her in turn. I took her to Shoprite to buy chicken and we went to KFC to get a cake. I already had drinks in my fridge. After shopping I took her to my place. Once at home when I wanted to cook, she said that I could not cook while she was there because according to her culture a man must not cook for a woman. I felt proud and honored. So, I let her cook. I played South African music, Nkhololo. She was happy, cool and dancing. While we were eating, she asked me questions about what I do in life, my age, if I have a girlfriend, etc. She was very straight forward compared to me who was turning around to ask her questions. Then I told her “I love you very much. You are beautiful, I love you”. She understood. At the same time, I was afraid because I didn’t know how she could react. She agreed at once. After that first day of our love, she started calling me a lot.”

Finance and decision

“Although we don’t stay together, we help each other financially. She’s working and I’m working. Sometimes if her or my payment is late, whoever gets money first assists the other with money (borrows) for rent especially.”

Our places (in & out of Yeoville)

“We only have two places in Yeoville: Art Café and Times Square. Art Café, to tell you the truth, ... every Wednesday we go because there is promotion for dagga! Times Square, we go to the bar because I like South African music.”



Michelle-Justine Nlandu



Bio details



Born: Kinshasa (DRC) in 1972
Arrived in Yeoville: 2001
Profession: Market trader (CBD)

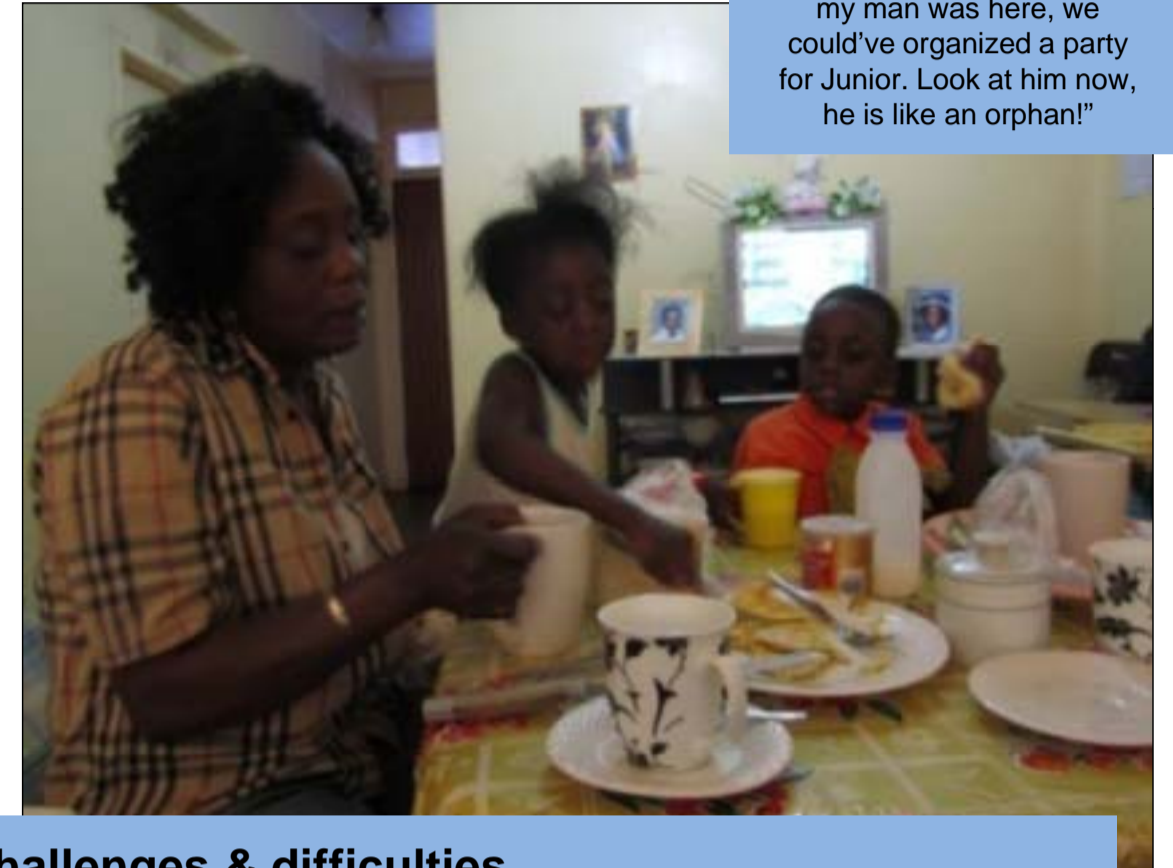


Born: Lodja (DRC) in 1967
Date arrived in Yeoville: 2000
Profession: Shop owner (Kempton Park)



Family status: Separated since 2008, 2 children
Met: Berea, 2003
Live: In a 3-bedroom flat, Yeoville

"In our dining room, on Junior's fourth birthday. If my man was here, we could've organized a party for Junior. Look at him now, he is like an orphan!"



"My husband is missing for the family to be complete. He left without any reason and went back to Congo. I am now raising our two children alone."

How we met

"I was a school teacher and my life was stable in Congo, but my family decided that I had to travel to the UK, and as I could not get a visa they sent me via South Africa. I faced a lot of sufferings and I wasted a lot of money [as the person I paid to help me travel did not keep her promises]. I lived in Berea where I was sharing a room with another Congolese lady. During our stay together I noticed her talkative behavior. She could not keep quiet about my initiatives with regard to my journey.

That is why one evening she brought in a man called Henri to meet me. The man explained that he wanted help regarding the procedure on how to travel overseas because he had been swindled by a pastor. Having already experienced a rip-off, I advised Henri to keep his money and use it for other purposes. The man kept on visiting me.

I then decided to get my own room. One evening, I was very surprised to hear Henri knocking on the door. He insisted to see me, and told me that he loved me very much for marriage. I didn't take it seriously. But time passed, the man kept on repeating the same words. I shared this with my friends who convinced me, saying that after failing to travel overseas, I had nothing to lose in getting married to that man. The man multiplied his visits to my place in Berea. That's how I fell in love with Henri, especially because he was insisting on marriage. Then I realized that I was pregnant."

How it became serious

"After a few months of pregnancy, Henri decided to formalize, officially introduced me to his family and gave cultural dowry to my family. In 2003, I had my first daughter, Catherine. We were staying together since then and decided to move from Berea to Yeoville where we gave birth to the second child, Junior. We were committed in our marital life and we were taking care of the household together. Life was very good and we lived as a married couple in harmony."

The future

"He abandoned me with the children. My commitment now is to raise these children."

Finances & decisions

"We had one account accessible to the both of us. He was contributing to the household as he was working and I was also contributing as I was running the business. The only time we faced financial crisis is when I gave birth. I couldn't work for about a month and from his side, he faced retrenchment. So, it was difficult. My family had to send us money from Congo for us to survive."

Our places (in & out of Yeoville)

"Our main places in Yeoville were the Church, the Yeoville market where we used to buy Congolese food and groceries; several shops like Shoprite, Supa Saver, Foodtown; KFC for the children and the bakery at the corner of Raymond and Rocky Street where they sell good breads and soft. Out of Yeoville, we would go to Eastgate Mall and Cresta Mall to restaurants and for the kids to play. There is also Oriental Plaza where we were buying items to send to Congo, that's our business provision place."

Overcoming challenges & difficulties

"We were very committed until Henri decided to go to Congo for business. We never had problems before. Maybe he had his own problems that he never shared with me. I even went to see him in Lubumbashi to try to bring him back, but I didn't succeed.

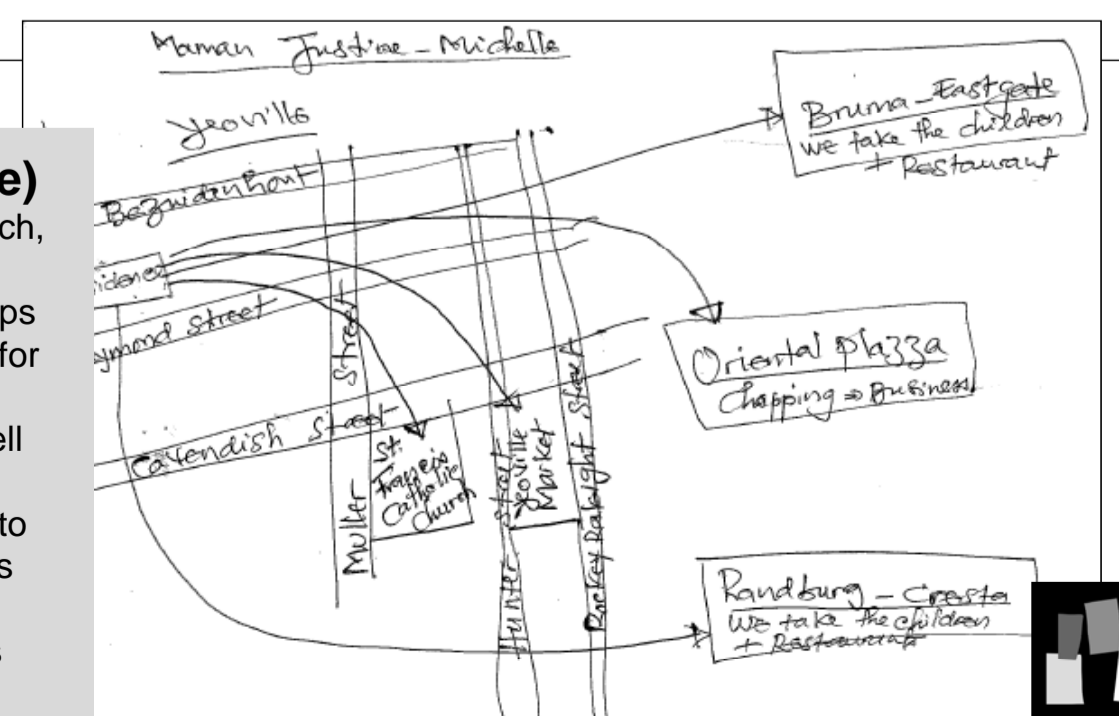
When I arrived he started by telling me that he wanted to make money for us, he just had started a business in Lubumbashi and was not ready to go back home with me. Then someone in the house told me, 'Oh, who are you? Are you Henri's new wife?', and I said, 'what do you mean, new wife?' He explained that Henri was married and his wife had just passed away, 'so you are the new one'. I was very shocked, and I did not understand. When I asked Henri, he denied, I found it cruel. That's why I took the decision to move on and leave him.

But it took me seven months to come back to Johannesburg, first because I ran out of money, and then because my visa expired. It is a priest that eventually paid for my ticket back to Johannesburg and my children."

How our families reacted

"When we started living together I communicated with my sisters back home, but not with my parents, because my sisters lied to the father telling him that I had already travelled to the UK, whereas I was still in South Africa. When my father knew about it, he cried a lot. He cooled down because he knew that it was a serious issue for marriage, and not just a love affair.

My family accepted the man because he formalized the relationship and they have already taken a half of lobola. But since he abandoned me with children, they hate him now. They don't want even to hear that I am in contact with him. My family is angry. From my husband's family, his mother supports his behaviour: when she heard that I followed him in Lubumbashi she came to cause trouble and chase me away. I don't know why. But his other brothers and sisters support me, they have spoken to him, but he hasn't changed. A priest is also trying to make him send money for the education of our children."



Willy-Claude Hebandjoko



And then she looked at me and asked “Why are you too serious?”. I answered “Because I am in front of a professional”.

Bio details



Born: Mwembe (DRC) in 1973
Arrived in Yeoville: 2007
Profession: Student

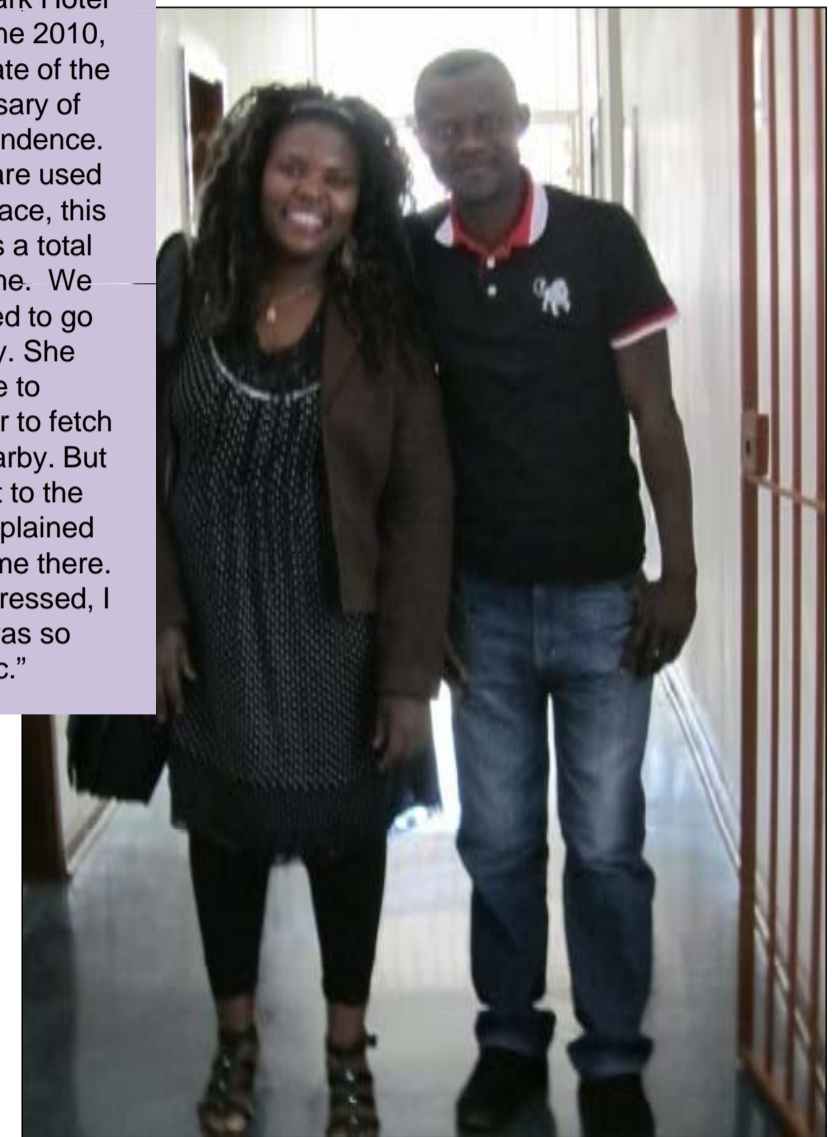


Born: Bhofolo (Eastern Cape) in 1968
Date arrived in Yeoville: 1996-99
Profession: Bank employee



Family status: Dating
Met : In Sandton (mall) in 2008
Live: Yeoville (him), with his cousin; Soweto (her) with her son

“In Sandton Park Hotel on the 30th June 2010, which is the date of the 50th anniversary of Congo independence. Although we are used to go to this place, this occasion was a total surprise for me. We hadn't planned to go out, that day. She asked me to accompany her to fetch something nearby. But when we got to the place, she explained why she took me there. I was very impressed, I thought it was so romantic.”



How we met

“I met Portia in 2009 in Sandton Woodmead Retail Park, in the bank where she was working, when I went to open an account. I had tried unsuccessfully to open an account in Yeoville - I didn't have the proof of address in my name, even though I explained that I was not owning the flat in which I was staying. I tried to get the proof of residence from my landlord, but it didn't work either. I then decided to go and try far from Yeoville. One of my friends told me that it would be easy for me to open a bank account in Woodmead. On a certain Wednesday in October 2008 I went with him in the morning. She attended to me. Surprisingly, she only requested my passport. She asked where I was staying. ‘In Yeoville’, I answered. She then said ‘How come that you came all the way from Yeoville to open a bank account? Why not in Yeoville?’ And I replied, ‘It seems like FNB has different management policy according to branches, but I preferred this one here’. She smiled and said, ‘I don't understand.’ I added ‘You are right. You can't understand’. What was interesting with her is that while she was asking all these questions, she had already opened the account. She told me to sit in the waiting room, she'd be with me after few minutes. After about 10 minutes she came, when I started worrying. She introduced herself and I did the same. She asked about my age, but I told her that a man never has an age, be him young or old, he is a man. She then insisted that we could meet. She gave me her phone number but I did not call for a month.”

How it became serious

“On the 15th December in the evening I called her number. She picked up the phone and was very happy to chat with me. We set an appointment and went for the first time to Sandton Park Hotel. We had to discuss about this new relationship. The conclusion was that let's hook up together and maybe give time to time and we will see where this takes us. So, since 2008 up to now, we are boyfriend-girlfriend.”

How our families & communities reacted

“There's not any reaction from our families because we haven't mentioned our relationship to them. My friends have accepted her, but they say: “Hey, wake up man! You should benefit from her. Why can't you take this opportunity and organise a fake marriage with her just to get a South African paper? You may divorce later, it doesn't matter!” Her friends say, “You guys you are serious with your relationship, hey! Are you gonna get married? Good luck!” One added, “Hey maan, do you know that she's older than you?”.

We have sometimes fights on cultural issues. I tell her, ‘In my culture the man is the head and the chief. We are not competing, you must listen to what I say. If I say no, it's no’. Or, ‘the man mustn't be in the kitchen and cook for the wife. You must cook for me every day because all the domestic works are yours and must be in your agenda’. Or also ‘it's up to me to decide whether my wife can work or just stay at home’. And she would say that Congo is not South Africa, that we are equal and we must discuss issues together, ‘50/50’, and even, ‘ladies first’. Another thing that is different is that she could not accept, like me, to stay with my cousin without him contributing financially to the household. It's like South Africans have lost African hospitality.

Language sometimes brings suspicion, especially when one of us talks for long on the phone in another language than English. One day at Chez Ntemba (it is a Bruma Night Club), I broke her phone because she talked for more than 30 minutes on the phone in Xhosa. She said, ‘can't you learn our language, if you are jealous?’ She's always impressed and happy when I say some words in Zulu or Xhosa, she says, ‘Oh, who is that woman who teaches you this language?’ ”

Overcoming challenges

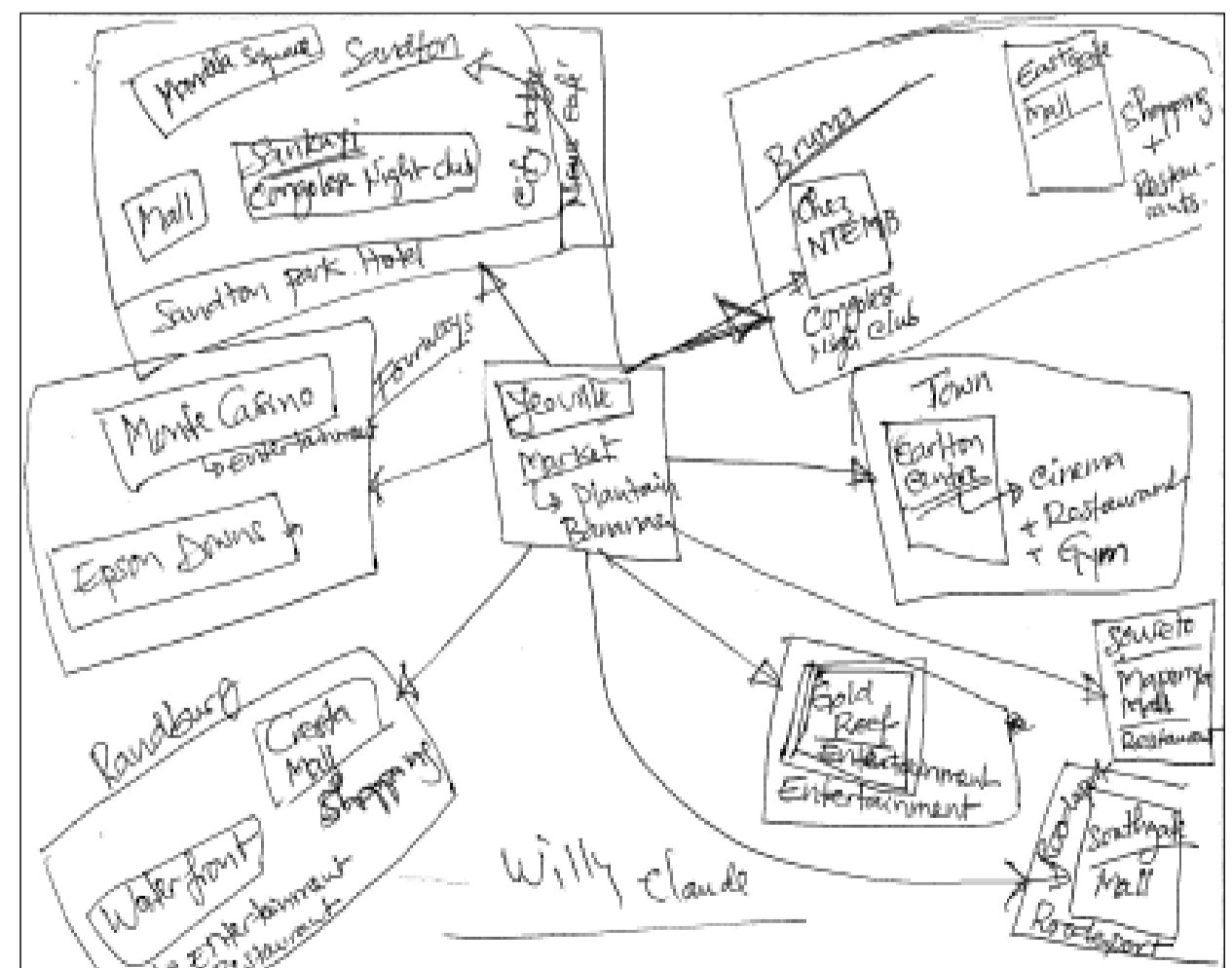
“The only one time we fought seriously, was when she accessed my facebook profile and found written on my status that I was married. I explained that I wrote to avoid disturbance from other women, but she didn't accept it. We kept a distance from each other for three months without any communication. I just left it that way and I never changed my profile, until she came back to me.”

Finances and decisions

“We are not living together yet. She is working, I am not. When we go out, she is in charge of everything most of the time, but sometimes I take my responsibilities as a man and I cover the expenses.”

The future

“We are committed in our relationship. We respect our principles, we are faithful to one another, and there's trust. We both agree that we can't do things in a hurry. We must wait until I finish my studies, get a job and then we can decide.”



Our places (in & out of Yeoville)

“We like going out a lot and always discovering new places, mostly out of Yeoville. She doesn't like Yeoville because she doesn't feel comfortable there. The only place she likes in Yeoville is the market where she buys plantain bananas. She also sometimes comes to St Francis Catholic church with me, in Yeoville. She is Christian Catholic and we share the same religious belief. She prays a lot, she is concentrated in Church, but I like to disturb her, saying something softly in her ear. She gets angry and she expresses it when we come out!”