



A bridge Between the Hearing and the Deaf!

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We have with us a man of so many inspirations and so much more. Life has showed him so many faces and challenges since his young age. After losing his hearing, Professor Haile Bokure created his own world inside the books of great writers and poets. He also managed to create a great world in literature, contributing many books of translation and original works including poems. He is a writer and was able to contribute the first computer written book to the country. Fully understanding the value of education, Prof. Haile went the great length and earned his educational honors at various universities of America.

We are honored to have a talk with Prof. Haile Bokure during his visit home town after a long time.

Welcome home Prof. It is nice to have you back.

Thank you.

Would you please take us back to the times, when you lost your hearing at a young age?

It happened when I was just a 13 year old boy. I lost my hearing after I was diagnosed with malaria. I think of it as a blessing in disguise because through my defenses I learned how other people lived without hearing. I became more sensitive and more compassionate about others. May be God wanted me to lose my hearing so that I can understand others. Over the years I leaned that hearing problem cannot be considered as a handicap but as a challenge. It is a challenge. I had to fight and I developed a strength in struggling to fit in. However, when one faces a challenge of living with deafness people's perception changes. I accepted what I cannot change. But the problem was with the people. I see myself not as a deaf person. I am not completely deaf, so I see myself as a bridge between the hearing and the deaf world. I am settled now. I feel comfortable around people, you know why?

No, why?

It is funny, because all the people in my age have hearing problems now. This time it is not only me. Life is very funny sometimes. Anyways,

the encounters I faced during my young age influenced me to channel my energy to reading and translating books.

The Shakespeare translations?

I got an old book from the brother of my friend, it was the Shakespeare tales. When I read I felt like it related to my life. As I said books became my friends after I lost my hearing. I was only a 9th grader at the time. I translated the book to Tigrigna but didn't have the money to publish it. But I was lucky enough to have it made to a stage drama at today's Keigh-Bahri Secondary School. The money I collected from the show wasn't enough to publish the book but it was enough for me to get a bus ticket to Addis Ababa.

You went to high school with students who didn't have a hearing problem?

Yes, which was very challenging for me. Most of the time I wasn't following. Almost 90% I depended on my books. There wasn't a secondary school for the hearing impaired. Books were my teachers. My struggle to learn on my own helped me to be a hard worker and more creative. That is how I finished my high school and went to Addis after my Matriculation exams.

How was life out of home?



In Addis I worked at a United Abilities Company, it was a company that hired people who were physically disabled. The idea was to raise awareness of the society because everyone had an opinion that people with disabilities could not function. The company's goal was to show every one that those visually impaired and hearing impaired could equally be employed and be a great service. I worked there for a long time as an assistant personal and counselor. At the same time I was able to work as a general secretary of the Ethiopian Association for the deaf for seven years. However, after my work experience I applied to the Gallaudet University for the deaf. It is a university established by Abraham Lincoln and is fully supported by the federal government. I had a high score to get into the University and I had a full scholarship. Unfortunately my travel expense was not covered.

Luckily, I had a friend of mine who asked the national association in Sweden and collected money which covered my travel expenses to the United States. I got my Social Work and Sociology BA degree and did my Master's on Vocational Rehabilitation of the Deaf. Also, I went to the American University where I was a third year doctoral student but couldn't finish my studies due to some problems. Since then, I have been working in different levels of schools for the hearing imaped.

Let's talk about one of the books you have translated, Eritrea ab zemene Bahre Negestat.

I read the book when I was in Addis. When it was written in Amharic it was very selective and I felt like it was short on the information it had. The Ethiopian writers didn't want to let our people know that it was our kings who used to rule the Red-Sea; they were very selective with what they were translating. That is why I wanted to translate it to Tigrigna, trying to include all the information. I found the book again when I was studying research library at the America University. I was so emotional to know that almost all the first chapters of the book were about Eritrea. I had challenges of course as there were lack of computers at that time. I stayed overnight to use the computers at my university when everyone went to sleep and I typed for the whole night.

I wanted to translate the book because, when I read the book I was shocked to find out how many animals and forests Eritrea used to have. I wanted for my people to know their history. For instance Dubarwa is a beautiful city which used to have thousands of kinds of animals. It really inspired me to write. People used to say that the history of Eritrea did only start to be written just after the Italians came here but it's wrong. Here was the book which was written about us centuries ago. And many

were inspired to write and translate books regarding our histories.

The first computer-written book, which probably might be the first in the eastern Africa, happens to be yours?

Yes. Tintawi Wege'n Bahln Eritrea, it is a translation I made when I was a student at the American University. It included various stories and poems from different ethnic groups. The director of RICE (Research and Information Centre of Eritrea) Dr. Araia Tsegai published it in 1997. That was my debut to the world of literature.

Why do you write, Prof?

Life is a beautiful journey. It's a mix of different contrary feelings. And I write to express the beauty of life. Everything excites me. I try to tell people stories through my poems. I am very happy when I write. Also, I speak many languages: Tigrigna, Ge'ez, English, Amharic, Italian, German, Spanish, French and Sign language. These languages help me to translate different books. I have almost over 30 translated and original published books. One of my books is about the challenges the deaf people go through and its solutions, which I contributed to the Eritrean Association for the deaf. Also there are eight books on the making. We have established an organization, Eritrean Hearing and Visually Impaired. It is an organization established by a group of Eritreans who are concerned about the disabled and try to help out with technologies which can be useful to the schools.

About your personal life.

I am married and have two beautiful twin daughters. Life has been challenging to them as well, since my wife is deaf too. They are all grownups now and I am very satisfied with my life.

Thank you for having us.

