



What lead to the formation of GAOS (NGO) - Percy's Life Story (GAOS President)

The beginning

Growing up as a child was arduous and not a walk in the park. My mind still entertains bitter-sweet memories of early childhood up to adolescence, because I went through hardships and indomitable challenges. I could presume that I have seen most of life's woes. For instance, when I was growing up I had the painful experience of watching my mother struggling single-handedly to put food on the table. What exacerbated the situation was that she did not have the benefit of a fixed monthly income from permanent employment.

What I am about to share with you is nothing divorced from the truth and not fiction: true to the minute detail based on every encounter that I can still recall to memory.

I know what is like to weep and weep without being heard, crying in your heart and no one coming to console you. As a child, at times you may not have the power temerity to say: "Please stop, you are hurting me or even ask somebody for help." At times when you are confronted with a crisis you may even think that God does not exist or He doesn't care.

This is how my life story begins "My name is Percy Madikwe and I am a man of 42 years of age, I am on the brink of middle age. I was raised by my mother, Dintle Madikwe, who died in 1998 of HIV/AIDS related complications. I am from a poor family that depended on revenue from operating a shebeen or 'spot' as popular known, vending a range of alcoholic beverages. We lived in an extended family, where violence from rowdy patrons was the order of the day. I also witnessed the suffering of my single parent mother and my matrilineal grandmother used to haggle over customers waiting to buy liquor, cigarettes or other items. These encounters over customers occurred because the former and latter were selling the same products from the same premises. As mentioned above, this demonstrated my late mother and grandmother's business survival tactics.

At times going for days without eating a decent meal, underscored the hardships we were going through. When we could afford, we would at least eat porridge without relish or something light. Many-a-times when I got home from school, I would find our house smelling of burnt-out paraffin fumes from the paraffin stove, but no sign of food. Even though my

grandmother used to haggle with my mother for customers, she had a good heart, because she used to share her plate of food with my mother. Other family members did not care about our suffering. Sometimes my siblings used to report to me that, their aunt would not give them food, without due notice. When it was lunch time, she would call her children, lock the door and give them food.

My stepfather, who is still alive, I regret to say, that either through ignorance or peer pressure, fell short of showing me parental love from early childhood. From the outset, my stepfather showed abusive tendencies towards me, once too often. For instance, corporal punishment appeared to be his favourite discipline; whenever I swayed from laid down behavioural standards for reasons that he could better explain. At times I would never understand the reasons for his frequent beatings that I suffered during his tenure as my custodian. I am convinced that I adopted this line of thinking he never physically abused my other two younger half-brothers and a sister because they were his children, his flesh and blood.

My mother knew about the abuse, but was powerless to intervene on my behalf. Part of my analysis of my mother's standoff may be because she feared that representing my cause would encourage her husband to abandon her, since he was her major source of income for buying prescribed medications and food.

My grandmother also told me that, she knew about the abuse by my stepfather and when I asked her to elaborate further she said: "Although there was nothing that me and your mother could do to prevent the ill treatment that your stepfather was imposing on you, we were both concerned. Your mother used to complain to me about how your stepfather was ill-treating you, but because her hands were tied for that time, nonetheless, she was anticipating adopting a more confrontation approach with him, when the ill treatment exceeded certain limits."

Because of the abuse that I suffered from a tender age when I was living with my stepfather and constant hand slaps and boxing over my face and ears, I developed a hearing problem. My step father's hatred towards me grew each and every day.

My biological father, Mr. Baleseng Maboka, deserted me when I was 5 years old, so goes the saga. For about 12 years, I used to think that Maboka, who worked as a taxi driver back then; and when he passed by our house sometimes and picked me up for ice-cream - - was just a family friend. Little did I entertain a hunch that Mr. Maboka was my real father, until one day my grandmother remarked about our striking resemblance. That was when the sad truth about who my real father was dawned on me!

During her association with my step father, my mother became ill on several occasions. After she was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, my stepfather threw her out and secretly married another woman.

My maternal grandmother unravelled the enigma about my mother's marital life when she took pains and confided to me later, that in 1970 the proposed marriage between my mother and biological father aborted when the former began an affair with my stepfather. The freak amorous affairs gave Maboka to abandon ship and seek a new relationship elsewhere.

The love of my real father was short lived, as he vanished like the east-west wind in what equated to a mysterious disappearance. I do not remember receiving any items of clothing from either him or my step father, except from my mother, who went out her miniscule budget to buy me clothing, though she was unemployed. After school and during holidays, I used to help my mother to perform some basic income earning chores such as selling alcohol, since it was the only business that could pay my school fees and other basic necessities.

It never rains but it pours, thus goes the old saying. There was no happiness in my life, when I realized that my mother was on the verge of death due to HIV/AIDS related illness. I tried many things to make myself forget about this situation and be happy. Sadness and anger came upon me, and that pushed me to seek comfort in alcohol, smoking and being involved with bad company at the tender age of 14. Hardly a day could ever pass without drinking alcohol and had even developed a habit of taking it to school because I was already an alcoholic. I became notorious for street brawls and always made sure that I sleep drunk to forget the experiences.

As my mother's condition deteriorated, she was admitted at Princes Marina Hospital for observation, cure and treatment. During her hospitalization our grandmother took care of us. At that time, I entertained a thought of committing suicide, since there appeared to be no purpose for living while my mother and last best hope was in hospital. I disliked going to school, since I had become an avowed alcoholic.

There was absolutely no progression in my life and ended up setting myself on fire with paraffin. At first I had wanted to use petrol but since it was not anywhere near me, I used paraffin. This happened after abuse with psychedelic drugs that I could lay my hands on. Although I was alone in the house, my screams attracted the attention of those who were near me including my grandmother who came running to save my life, despite her advanced age. She stripped off the burning clothes that I was wearing and that saved my life.

Up to now, I still consider her initiative courageous and brave even though despite her advanced age!

Despite the serious burns that I sustained, I guess I didn't die for a purpose, even though I was experiencing acute after burn-pains. The doctor assured me that although the burns had affected my heart, I was going to live.

After suffering for so many years from my childhood and also having lived as an orphan, I can't recall having had an interview, discussion or even a chat with incumbents from any organization to speak out about my life experiences. It took me years and years for me to find

help, I cried and cried but nobody heard my call for help, while I was being destroyed inside day by day, so much so that my crisis pushed me to the point of committing suicide. Today I ask myself nagging questions: “What guarantees me that there are none going through what my siblings and I went through, how would I know if I don’t stand up to find out and make sure that it doesn’t happen to other children?”

These feelings-cum-experiences instilled me to entertain thoughts of forming an organization that would provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children, called “**Guardian Angel Orphans Society (GAOS)**”. This work and commitment, it goes without saying, is indeed not an easy task. I am confident that a brighter future is in sight since I have vowed to the children that no matter what happens, I would never fail them in improving their lives.

With the help of former Judge; Justice Unity Dow who volunteered to pay my school fees, I managed to complete and pass my computer course at NIIT Computer Education. Judge Dow also offered us living accommodation in her house in White City free of charge. She hoped the new accommodation would help us re-build our lives as a family, and would also give my siblings an opportunity to concentrate on their education and do better in class. Indeed am happy to say all have passed Form V and proceeded to University.

In 2004, my biological father passed away, and in 2019 I met my younger step brother (23 years old). The brother I didn’t know existed, my biological father’s son. I helped him find a permanent job. He got promoted and was also offered a company car. We have a good relationship and we do good things together.

Today I am no longer that person I used to be, I don’t drink and smoke anymore since I gave my life to Jesus more than 20 years ago. I have also learnt to make ‘failure my teacher and not my undertaker’. I also thought of writing a book that could raise awareness about how best to live with and survive these maladies. Even though I didn’t go for any training to become a writer, I believed in myself that I could do it and asked God for guidance.

Indeed I managed to achieve my goal, I have written four books so far, two are novels entitled “**Pelo e Setlhogo**”(Cruel heart) and “**Boleo**” (Sin), respectively.

The other two books are an anthology of short stories entitled, “**Leisong 2**” and “**Leisong 3**”. The books were prescribed by the Ministry of Education Curriculum Development Unit and they are currently being used by learners in government schools. The success of the books motivated me to continue writing more books as a way of educating and informing the nation, especially the youth who are faced with challenges in life. The aim of my writing is to give hope and provide guidance. I have written 12 educational books so far.

THE END