

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: February, 2007

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YEAR-LONG CHRONICLE OF A TEENAGER'S LIFE WITH AIDS
Radio Broadcast and Listening Tour in South Africa, March 1-16th, 2007

Thembi's AIDS Diary: A Year in the Life of a South African Teenager

"In the past," says Thembi Ngubane, "our parents were suffering from apartheid. They wanted to be free. Now it is the same with HIV and AIDS. This is the new struggle."

Thembi was 19 when she first met American radio producer Joe Richman. After interviewing dozens of teenagers living with HIV/AIDS, he gave Thembi a tape recorder. Over the course of a year, she kept an audio diary of her inner-most thoughts and her daily struggle to live with AIDS.

With poetic insight and humor, **Thembi's AIDS Diary** captures the small moments that help tell the larger story of the AIDS epidemic: a visit to the township clinic to apply for anti-retroviral drugs; facing neighbors and friends as they find out she is HIV positive; the moment she finally tells her father she has AIDS; and quiet, late-night dancing at home with her boyfriend.

Thembi recorded more than 50 hours of tape, which was edited into a half-hour documentary broadcast on National Public Radio in the United States on April 19, 2006. **Thembi's AIDS Diary** has since aired on BBC World Service, ABC (Australia), and CBC (Canada). Already, her story has been heard by an estimated fifty million listeners around the world.

In March 2007, **Thembi's AIDS Diary** will be heard in South Africa for the first time. Her story will be broadcast throughout the country – on SABC and community radio stations – in English, Xhosa and Zulu. To coincide with the broadcast, Thembi and Radio Diaries will launch a two-week speaking tour of the country, presenting her story at high schools, universities, AIDS organizations and clinics, Constitution Hill, and other public listening and discussion events. As part of this educational campaign, CDs of **Thembi's AIDS Diary** (in English, Xhosa, and Zulu) will be distributed along the tour. The CD is hosted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The South Africa tour follows the remarkable success of Thembi's tour of the United States in April and May of 2006. Thembi presented her story to American high school and college students, Congressional staff in DC, AIDS doctors in Boston, celebrities in Hollywood, and HIV positive teens in Chicago. Thembi's tour was reported on by The

Washington Post, Associated Press, Newsweek, and radio stations across the United States. She recorded a video diary for MTV. And on the last day of the tour, Thembi was invited to represent people living with AIDS on a special CNN global broadcast with President Bill Clinton and actor-activist Richard Gere.

To international audiences, **Thembi's AIDS Diary** offered an intimate portrait of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, uncovering the humanity buried under a mountain of statistics.

"On tape and in person, Thembi has become a voice for a disease that is numbing and overwhelming in its power and reach."

– The Washington Post

For more than 10 years, Radio Diaries Productions has been creating ground-breaking, first-person documentaries for public radio in the United States. Past award-winning projects include *Teenage Diaries*, *Prison Diaries*, and *Mandela: An Audio History*, which won the 2005 duPont-Columbia University Award, the broadcast equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize.

"I had become somewhat numb to media coverage of AIDS," says Radio Diaries' Executive Producer Joe Richman, who lived in South Africa for several years. "But when I met Thembi I was immediately struck with her charisma, her offbeat take on her disease, and her honesty. She makes the AIDS pandemic very personal and human. It's a story that I believe will resonate with everyone who listens, even if they think they don't want to hear about AIDS."

In the United States, **Thembi's AIDS Diary** has already proved to be a powerful tool to help reduce the stigma of AIDS and highlight the need for antiretroviral drugs in Africa. Thembi is excited to bring this message to her own country in March. "South Africa needs this story," she says. "We need many stories like this. So people won't be afraid to stand up and talk about what it's really like to have AIDS."

"AIDS is not going to bring me down, it's only something that is inside my blood. Outside I'll be the boss."

– Thembi Ngubane

The full documentary, as well as audio clips, photos, background information, tour itinerary, and The AIDS Action Toolkit can be found at the **Thembi's AIDS Diary Project** website: <http://www.radiodiaries.org/aidsdiary>
For press photos: <http://www.radiodiaries.org/aidsdiary/about.html>
To request a preview CD contact producer Joe Richman.

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More Information About Thembi's AIDS Diary South Africa Tour and Broadcast

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Cape Town (February 28-March 3 and March 16-20)

Presentations at UCT, Mothers 2 Mothers, MSF, various high schools, and presentation for members of Parliament.

Johannesburg (March 4-6)

Presentations at Constitutional Hill, WITS, Jabulani High in Soweto, and other locations. Interviews on SAFM and other stations.

Durban (March 7-8)

Radio interviews and presentations for students and international NGOs sponsored by US Consulate.

Eastern Cape (March 9-15)

Presentations at AIDS clinics in Umtata and Lusikisiki, various high schools, and Rhodes University. Radio interviews and presentations in East London and Port Elizabeth.

BROADCAST DETAILS

- Thembi's AIDS Diary will air on SABC radio stations as well as community stations across the country.
- The documentary will be available in the original English version as well as Xhosa and Zulu versions.
- The full documentary is 23 minutes long, and will also be available for broadcast in a five shorter chapters to be aired throughout the week.
- Thembi will be available for local radio interviews on the tour. For samples of her radio interviews in the United States, visit www.radiodiaries.org/aidsdiary

TOUR DETAILS

- The presentation format is a multi-media discussion between Thembi and producer Joe Richman using photographs and audio clips to illustrate her story. The presentation is followed by a short question and answer period. It runs about 90 minutes.

EDUCATIONAL CD DETAILS

- The CD includes versions of **Thembi's AIDS Diary** (23 minutes) in English, Xhosa and Zulu.
- The CD is hosted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
- The CDs will be available on the tour, and distributed to selected schools and AIDS organizations throughout South Africa.

For more information and to listen to **Thembi's AIDS Diary** visit: www.radiodiaries.org



About Radio Diaries

Radio Diaries is a U.S.-based not-for-profit production company grounded in the simple faith that everyone has a story to tell, and that it's possible to find extraordinary stories in ordinary places. Radio Diaries projects have won every major broadcast award in the U.S., and have helped to pioneer a model for working with people to document their own lives. Radio Diaries documentaries represent a new kind of oral history, a unique fusion of art and journalism. Past projects include: *Mandela: An Audio History*, *My So-Called Lungs*, *New York Works*, *Prison Diaries*, and *Teenage Diaries*.

Whether it's teenagers or prisoners, the broadcasts allow listeners to eavesdrop on the aural journal entries of people they might not ordinarily meet. And because these personal revelations come without fanfare, the immediacy of each solitary voice can be startling.

— The New York Times

The characters grab you, their stories crackling with passion and truth.

— Washington Post

Joe Richman, Executive Producer

Joe Richman founded Radio Diaries in 1996. He is an award-winning reporter and producer, and an adjunct professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. In 2003, Joe and his wife moved to South Africa for several years to work on the five-part radio series, *Mandela: An Audio History*. During production of the Mandela series, Joe met Thembi Ngubane and they began working together on *Thembi's AIDS Diary*. Joe's two young daughters were both born in South Africa.

Mr. Richman's recorded "Diaries" are sometimes eerily intimate, with the audience entering into a closer bond with the person on tape than is possible perhaps in any other medium, including documentary film.

— The New York Times

Richman, a kind of Studs Terkel of the airwaves, elicits intimate, disarming radio documentaries.

— Los Angeles Times