



SCOLASTICA WAIRIMU – My Story

My Battle With Disability

I was born 23 years ago at Pumwani Maternity to my parents John Kihya and Alice Waithira Kihia. My parents were overjoyed to have their first born baby girl; this was a peak in their marriage. But they never knew what was in store for them. As I grew up my mum nursed me like a first-time mother who enjoyed raising her first born. At the age of four months, my mother realized I was not responding well to things like other babies she had seen before. She informed her friends who advised her to take me to the hospital and enquire from the doctors. The doctors assessed me and realized I was having hearing issues. They informed my mum I should start hearing therapy, hence she took me to the therapist.



Scolastica (left) learning to use a computer

I continued with my therapy until the doctors pounced that I was actually deaf. This was a rude shock to my mother and father but they chose to love me. As I grew up I could not interact with other children freely and kept to my mother. I

became a very withdrawn girl and just kept to myself and played on my own.

Hell Broke Loose

When I got to the school-going age, all the hell broke loose because that's the time my parents realized I was not a child like other children. By then I had a brother who was 100% well. No school around our area could accept me with my disability condition. It was also this time when my parents relocated upcountry in Muranga and the society started talking ill about me and the family. My parents started looking for a school for me and finally got a vacancy in Tumu Tumu Girls for the Deaf where I enrolled in nursery up to class 8, sat for my Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exams and passed. I was admitted to Kambui secondary School for the Deaf in Form One. All this time life was good because all my school mates and teachers were deaf. We were birds of the same feathers. After four years I sat for my final secondary school exams and passed, then joined Karen Technical College for the Deaf where I did my exams and passed again well.

Disabled Persons Belong To Another World

All this time I never felt the impact of being disabled in hearing until my college sent me to get internship. No institution could accept me as they saw me as a burden. Thank God I have a cousin who loves and understand me. Jackson Gichure I respect you and will always salute you. You have journeyed with me and never get tired and always gives me a shoulder to cry on. You have learnt through the difficulty ways to

communicate with me and use sign language. You have given me a home in Nairobi after my parents relocated to the upcountry.

Jackson went back to the college (KTC) to seek advice from the tutors and one of them directed us to KEPHIS Hotel for an internship. Thank God they respected the tutor and gave me a placement. After the internship, I was to go back to College but I could not as we lacked the fees. My parents are small scale farmers hence the income is low. When we finally got the fees the term was over and the next class intake was full, hence I have to wait until September 2019. This is not easy for me because the question is: "What will a deaf girl be doing all this time with herself?"

Jackson went back to the College and has been advised to get an attachment for me until September when I will go back for my classes. If internship was a problem, what about attachment and who wants a deaf employee? We have been walking from one institutions to another looking for attachment but all in vain. It's not easy and very humiliating when you realize you are missing this because you are deaf.

A Turn In My Life As I Came Across My Shining Star

Never judge the book by the cover! All people are not the same. Jackson woke up one morning and informed me he wants to take me to Baraka Women's Center because the Center Manager Teresia had listened to the story and has promised him she would help the young lady. I knew it would be the same story like other places so I was not so enthusiastic about it. We arrived at the Center and were received a warm welcome by lovely and lively women. What a place to be! Where you feel you belong and you are worthy! I shared my story with the Program Director Wanjiru Ngigi through my cousin, and through her reaction I could see she is willing and ready for me.

Baraka Women's Center has accepted me for attachment with my disability and also to be training with them. This is surely a turn in my life where people accept me the way I am. There are many challenges when you are disabled and you are female. I never applied to be one but many people cannot understand that. The trainees have been assisting me and training me through text messages as the trainer trains.

Long live Baraka Women's Center. It's a place for women who are burdened and rejected. I love you all. As I am talking to the Program Manager, I have gained skills in beading and beauty therapy. I am always waking up early purposed to do something beneficial for myself.

Story told by Scolastica Wairimu Baraka Women Center, Nairobi, Kenya March 2019

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