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Blind woman of vision  
opens own business

By JOLENE MARRIAH

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Tying a sari in two minutes, rolling perfectly round rotis and preparing what her brother calls the best mutton breyani may be a challenge for most people, but for visually-impaired Tunusha Naidu it's all in a day's work.

The 32-year-old of Umkomaas was born blind but it hasn't stopped her achieving her goals.

To mark International Day for Persons with Disabilities, Naidu has opened her own company, Able, which stands for Ability Beyond Life Expectations.

The aim of her company, according to Naidu, is to help other businesses achieve their BEE compliance by having at least 2% of their workforce made up of disabled persons.

“We help companies achieve this quota via training courses and seminars. We also provide information on how to make the floor plan accessible.”

In the last month, Naidu has been busy setting up her company and is excited to begin working.

Speaking about her path to success, Naidu said she had attended Naidoo Memorial Primary School until Grade 7.

“The only school available for visually-impaired learners was in Pietermaritzburg and I did not want to board at the school.

“I attended normal schooling and had all my notes recorded by my mother. During exams, teachers would read the questions and write down the answers (I provided).”

After 1994, Naidu attended the Open Air School in Glenwood.

“I was among the first Indian visually-impaired learners at the school.”

And while she could have opted for easy courses, Naidu enjoyed the challenge and took up physics, maths, accounting and business economics.

“It was pretty challenging, especially accounting, but I passed with an exemption,” she laughed.

She didn't stop there though, as Naidu then registered for a degree in linguistics, majoring in French and isiZulu, and graduated in 2004, cum laude.

She went on to complete her honours degree in 2005 and began lecturing first-year students the following year.

“I was then unemployed for many years. A year ago I joined African Lotus Productions working for Sunday Sadhana (a popular Hindu magazine programme aired on the SABC).

“I did productions, co-ordination and script writing. Learning how to use the (Apple) MacBook to edit interviews was challenging but fun,” she said.

“I resigned in September this year to pursue my business interests.”

As a motivational speaker, Naidu said that she had learnt to accept her disability from a young age. “I think it's made me into the person I am. I am happy. This is my path and journey. Much of my success is attributed to Sai Baba and my parents. I also believe that you have to be assertive. If you want to make it in life you have to be a self-starter.”

Naidu said she often heard people saying what she could not do. “There are a lot of misconceptions about persons with disabilities, you have to constantly prove yourself to people.”

She loves spending time with her parents, Jay and Shamilla, both of whom are involved in business, and siblings Devishini, 36, an attorney and Lovendra, 31, a logistics company owner, as well as sister-in-law Shinaaz.

“I love cooking. As for a sari, I can tie that in two minutes,” laughs Naidu.

Source URL: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/blind-woman-of-vision-opens-own-business-1.1954644#.VnHBPsuRIU>

Bursaries for persons with  
disabilities living in Tswane who  
matriculated in 2015

Hello all,

Bursaries are available for people in Tswane (Pretoria) living with disabilities who have matriculated in 2015.

If you are a person living with a disability who have just matriculated, or know of such a person, please contact me via Whatsapp on +27612294455 or email [cv@unlockingabilities.com](mailto:cv@unlockingabilities.com).

Thank you.

Hanif Kruger

## TEN ACCESS BLUNDERS THAT THE NONDISABLED MAKE

By: Emily Beitiks

Well, it happened again. Last night, I was hosting an event and even though the topic was access for people with disabilities, I made a big access blunder. The event was running late, and I failed to consider the fact that the ASL interpreters needed to clock out, putting them and the Deaf attendee in a difficult and unfair position.

These sorts of slip-ups are common for all of us who host events, disabled and nondisabled alike. But we don't share our mistakes often enough. As a nondisabled ally, I think it's especially important that I cop up to my moments of failure because I owe it to my disabled friends and colleagues who patiently teach me when I drop the ball.

I also know now that access isn't just about accommodations for people with disabilities. While society may see disability as a burden, I know that disability opens up creativity and innovation. I've personally benefited from many access features intended for people with disabilities. I am grateful for open captioning, for example, so that if I lose concentration during the pivotal moment in which a speaker provides the argument of their paper, I can look to the captioner's screen for what I missed. With a co-sleeping 9 month old baby at home, this feature has been particularly useful lately. Having been working with people with disabilities for over ten years, I see that bodies and minds are on a wide spectrum; there is no "disability community" but rather "communities." So working to make our world more accessible to disabled communities is challenging, and sometimes I make mistakes. In hopes that it may help you learn, here are my top ten memories of failure for your enjoyment in no particular order:

### **1) I've failed to introduce myself as nondisabled.**

When I speak on behalf of the Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability, it is important that I disclose my status as a "temporarily able-bodied person." Failing to do so not only hides the place of privilege from which I speak but also renders people with invisible disabilities on the panel as nondisabled.

### **2) I've booked interpreters for events and forgotten about the importance of schmoozing with other participants before and after the official event.**

While calling it “networking” may make some of us cringe, it's incredibly important to people's professional and political work. If we want to continue to eliminate the divide that has long existed between people with disabilities and the Deaf community, we need to build in opportunities for conversation over a glass of cheap wine and a cheese cube or two.

### **3) I put out flowers at an event.**

Classic rookie move. We gotta have flowers at the bar to make things pretty, right? Wrong. The flowers make your event dangerous for attendees with multiple chemical sensitivities. So, go with paper decorations or just pass and enjoy that it's one less thing on the event planning “to do” list – woohoo!

### **4) I gave a PowerPoint presentation and did not describe my slides.**

Okay, before I lose all my street creds here, please note that it was a long time ago when I was an undergrad. But it wasn't just any presentation. The focus was disability. And my low-vision adviser was in the audience. Huge fail?: yes. Did I learn?: yes. Should you learn from my fail and start giving audio description of your slides?: YES!

### **5) I planned for wheelchair seating but forgot that wheelchair riders sometimes travel in packs.**

Another classic nondisabled rookie move. Yes, of course, I have wheelchair attendees at Superfest 2015 seating! Oh ... you'd all like to sit together? FAIL. At Superfest: International Disability Film Festival, we now have a range of options for wheelchair riders to sit with their other wheelchair rider companions, to be next to non-wheelchair riding friends, or to sit in the multiple chemical sensitivities section. We've come a long way baby.

### **6) I've organized events and forgotten to ask if the stage is accessible.**

Even if none of the planned presenters uses a wheelchair, you still want to plan for the possibility of a wheelchair rider pulling a Kanye-West-interruption-of-Taylor-Swift move, so the stage must have a ramp or lift. Nondisabled allies should not leave this battle to the wheelchair rider colleagues to fight alone.

### **7) I've pushed handshakes.**

Plenty of people in the disability community shake hands, but handshakes need not be the norm. Whether one doesn't have hands, doesn't have control of their limb's movements, or is triggered by the social anxiety of contact, handshakes can cause a lot of unnecessary grief so ask first.

### **8) I've lined up venues without gender-neutral bathrooms.**

Hosting events for people with disabilities requires you to think about all the needs of your attendees beyond disability issues.

## **9) I've pressured people to commit to full-day events.**

This is a common conference strategy: you pressure your attendees to stay together for a whole day, three days, whatever so that the group may adequately bond. Or you push for an early start and urge people to “power through” with short breaks. However, this is an ableist model. It doesn't account for the needs of people who require a long time to get ready, long bathroom breaks, or people with chronic fatigue.

## **10) I've hogged the microphone.**

Full disclosure: I'm still working on this one. I like to talk. And oh do I love a good Q&A. But if I'm on a panel with people with disabilities, I need to constantly remind myself that my voice must often come second. My confidence with public speaking is inseparable from the privileges I have as a nondisabled, white, heterosexual person.

So... what did I miss? Jump on the comments section and share please. There's no comprehensive guidebook for this stuff (and if there was, the first item would be that guidebooks aren't going to prepare you for everything). A reminder in closing, it is better to have tried and blundered than never to have tried at all. Getting to work with disability communities is worth it.

\* Special thanks to Corbett O'Toole for her patient guidance on my access blunders as well as this post.

TEN ACCESS BLUNDERS THAT THE NONDISABLED MAKE <https://t.co/6GHpZFrTAT>  
via @wordpressdotcom

Will South Africa EVER offer  
free services to the disabled?

South Africa has a long way to go before it's able to offer blind and visually impaired citizens a decent quality of life, according to Retina South Africa.

There are approximately 380 000 blind people and over one million people suffering from low vision in South Africa, stated the SA Guide Dogs Association.

Disabled persons in South Africa are nowhere near having the same opportunities as their able bodied counterparts. This is according to Retina South Africa who highlighted the struggles of the blind and visually impaired as December marks International Month of Disabled Human Rights.

The patient-run organisation is dedicated to fundraising for a cure for the 150 000 people in South Africa suffering from retinal degenerative disorders such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Stargardt Dystrophy and Macular Degeneration.

With over 80 organisations working in the sector to get equal opportunities and improve the lives of the blind and vision impaired, the battle is an uphill struggle as the scramble for limited resources continues.

The biggest challenge facing blind/vision impaired persons is lack of jobs and transport. "Partially sighted citizens of South Africa are often not regarded as disabled and are often excluded from disabled employment initiatives," says Claudette Medefindt Head of Science for Retina South Africa. "They are often underemployed and the first to be retrenched." Although the labour law indicates that between 2 and 5% of the workforce must be from the disabled sector, corporations tend to employ physically disabled persons rather than blind/vision impaired persons.

"Even when these people are employed, the infrastructure and technology are not available to make them compete equally with their sighted colleagues."

Retina South Africa pointed out that there are computer programmes, cell phones and magnifiers available that can assist blind/low vision persons to do the job just as well as anyone else.

"Programmes such as JAWS and Zoom text, large print keyboards, voice activation software and e-readers are all easily available, but most companies are not interested in supplying reasonable accommodation."

### **Accessible transport has also been outlined as another challenge.**

"It is well documented that our public transport system is ageing and dangerous even for able bodied persons. The government-funded transport systems for disabled persons such as Dial A Ride do not recognise blind/low vision persons as being disabled and when questioned merely said that `they have a cane and can walk`. How insensitive is this?" The only options available is to ask family and friends for transport or enlisting the service of meter cabs which can turn out to be very expensive.

### **Extra expenses**

"In other countries such as Australia, the government gives free bus/train passes to vision impaired persons as well as taxi vouchers to use where there is no public transport. They are allowed two train passes a year to go away on holiday, not only for themselves but for a companion as well.

"Furthermore, the Australian government gives them a disability pension even if they have a job, recognising that as a disabled person you have extra expenses and often have to pay others to do everyday things such as cleaning, gardening and shopping. They are also entitled to a carer's allowance, computer equipment, lighting installations and all sorts of other benefits. South Africa has a long way to go to be able to offer this to its disabled citizens."

The organisation also called for ordinary South Africans to be educated on identifying and assisting blind/vision impaired persons. "Most people think that if you have a white cane there is

something wrong with your legs! Even people working in shops, airports, hospitals, where you would expect them to be trained to recognise and assist blind/low vision persons have no clue how to do this."

Retina South Africa says that blind/low vision persons want to be part of the fabric of society and want to put their weight behind building a new and better country, but without the basic requirements and access to opportunities, it is obvious that it will take a very, very long time before this becomes a reality.

(Article from news24).

Lise-Mari tree op in  
radiodrama deur  
Angelo Julies

Lise-Mari van Wyk, 'n gr. 9-leerder by Pionierskool, het op 17 November by die RSG-kunste fees haar debuut as stemkunstenaar gemaak.

"Kobus Burger, RSG se uitvoerende regisseur vir drama, het tydens die finale rondes van die kykNET-toneelspelkompetisie by die Kunstekaap in Mei vanjaar haar verhoogtalent raakgesien. Hy het haar genooi vir 'n oudisie saam met die groep finaliste by die Seepunt-ateljee van RSG," vertel Derek Daly, Van Wyk se drama-onderwyser.

Die tienerdrama, *Ons het gees*, is spesiaal geskryf deur Anton Treurnich, skrywer van die middagvervolgverhaal, *Vloek van die rooigety*, en hierin het sy die rol van Ria gespeel.

Haar optrede het groot lof ontvang van die bekende regisseur, Eben Cruywagen. "Ek maak nie dikwels voorspellings nie, maar nou maak ek wél een: Lise-Mari van Wyk sal nog as een van die grootstes onder die grotes gereken word," het hy gesê. "Haar werksetiek is prysenswaardig. Sy is gefokus, toegewyd en verstommend professioneel."

"Take a bow, Lise-Mari. Jy het jou stempel afgedruk. As regisseur respekteer ek jou dissipline en jou professionaliteit. As mens bewonder ek jou waagmoed, jou durf en jou stil, innerlike krag," het Cruywagen bygevoeg.

Sy het daarna ook 'n rol losgeslaan in 'n volwaardige radiodrama met 26 episodes, *Operasie Renoster*. Die opnames sal in Desember plaasvind.

Daly sê hy is baie trots op Van Wyk. "Sy is baie talentvol en hardwerkend, sy gaan dit nog baie ver bring."

Van Wyk het aan die *Standard* gesê: "Dit voel nog so onwaar, eintlik te goed om waar te wees. Ek het nooit gedink ek sal so goed vaar in drama nie. Ek is dankbaar dat meneer Daly my aangemoedig het om deel te neem en vir Andrea Streso wat my afgerig het."

Van Wyk se ouers en familie is baie trots op haar. “Ons is oorweldigend bly en baie trots op Lise-Mari. Sy is 'n bewys dat blinde persone enige iets kan vermag en enige iets oorkom kan word,” het haar pa, Johan, gesê.