

Maphefo, South Africa

Maphefo, 18, was born June 16, 1985 in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has 3 older sisters.

When Maphefo was eight years old, her father stopped working. Subsequently, when the school asked her parents for school fees, they could not afford to pay them. Hence, Maphefo stopped attending school.

For a year, she looked after her neighbor's two babies and cleaned the house for no money. Sometimes, she was given food. During this time, she said, her teacher always asked about her and why she was not in school. It was because of the funds, she said.

After some time, Maphefo was practically alone. Her father had left, two of her sisters lived with their boyfriends, her third sister was in a safe home, and her mother had gotten sick.

One day when Maphefo was nine years old, she went with a friend to a gas station. They went up to a car with a "white man" from South Africa in it. She and her 10-year-old friend went with him to his house, she said, where he offered them alcoholic drinks and her friend went into his room. When she came out, Maphefo went in. She said that the man asked her to take off her clothes. She did not want to, but her friend said that if she did not then she would not be able to buy medicine for her mother. Therefore, she returned to his room and, she said, he slept with her. The man paid the two girls fifty rand, a total of about \$7, for their young bodies. Maphefo said they did not talk about it on their way home. She did not tell anyone what had happened to her. She told her mother that her friend had given her the money.

Maphefo bought the medicine for her mom, who did not get better. One day she called an ambulance and got her mom to the hospital. Afterwards, she was all alone. After going back to school for a little while, she had to return to the streets. She said that she went back to the same man.

One night her father came home, drunk, looking for food. Maphefo gave him her money to give to her mother in the hospital. Later she found out that he never gave it to her.

Maphefo's mom died in June 1998 when Maphefo was 13 years old. Maphefo never got to see her mom before she died. She went to the funeral.

Afterwards, she had to stay home. Maphefo told how a Nurse Assistant from a clinic in the community used to come visit her and bring food. She was the first person to whom Maphefo told the story about selling her body. The Nurse told Maphefo about a t.v. talk show like 'Oprah' called 'Felicia'.

Maphefo and her friend decided to tell their story on Felicia. On the set Maphefo met Thabisile C. Msezane, who asked her to come stay with her. Thabisile adopted Maphefo, who now has more than 100 brothers and sisters.

After finishing primary school and high school, Maphefo is now in her first year of college for eighteen months. She is studying Secretarial Catering, which will train her to be both a secretary and a cook.

Maphefo is also the Vice-President of a one-year old club of twenty-five 14-25 year olds called *Youth Ending Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (YECSEC). Maphefo would like to be a social worker and journalist.