

## **Natasha Mhone**

### ***“I am a living miracle”***

Natasha’s story is a little different to her GenA cohort family’s, for it was the invitation to apply to join Gen A that inspired her to stand in her truth and tell her story for the very first time outside of her immediate family.

Natasha was diagnosed as HIV positive aged 15, having been born with the disease. Natasha’s mother passed away from the disease when she was nine, but it was only as a teenager she found out the true circumstances of her mother’s death. Her family, through the love they have for her, advised Natasha to keep her status a secret from all but immediate family. Whilst they themselves did not see Natasha any differently, they knew that the stigma and misunderstanding surround HIV in their community would have a devastating effect on Natasha’s life.

The day of Natasha’s diagnosis changed everything for her. She immediately felt different and isolated, having little knowledge of what HIV was and how it would affect her. For 13 years, Natasha kept this secret, fearing peoples’ reactions and believing – like her family – that she would not be accepted. Until now.

Now, with her family’s continued support, she is ready to tell her story.

Natasha works for an NGO that focuses on research and development for HIV prevention and care and hopes that by sharing her experiences, HIV prevention and treatment gets the attention it deserves within SDG 3 – and that people in her position feel less alone. Her next step is to use her passion for storytelling and commitment to working in healthcare to forge a career in Healthcare Communications, believing in the transformational power of stories.

Natasha sees herself as a living miracle, and hopes that her story helps others living with HIV understand that they are, too.