



# THING WITH NO NAME

A FILM BY SARAH FRIEDLAND + ESY CASEY

**Treatment:**

*Thing With No Name*, a feature-length documentary, is an intimate portrait that follows two women with full-blown AIDS in rural South Africa as they try to access treatment through the public sector. The film takes the viewer to Okhahlamba, a traditional Zulu area nestled in the shadow of the Drakensburg Mountains, a stunning UNESCO World Heritage Site. Filmmakers Sarah Friedland and Esy Casey were introduced to this community by one of its members, their friend and Ground Producer Phumzile Ndlovu. Through this connection, the filmmakers were able to integrate into the families with ease, participating in the daily activities of people living with the illness, and sharing in their moments of pain, joy, and humor.

This film is a portrait of two families, and more specifically, two individuals: Danisile Mvula and Ntombeleni Mlangeni. The film opens with both women describing their history and understanding of HIV/AIDS. From there, it takes the viewer through both women's experiences as they initiate treatment. Danisile responds well to the medications that she is now committed to for the rest of her life; she creates nicknames to help her remember the different pills, and goes over the protocol with her family and her home-based caregiver, a volunteer nurse. Ntombeleni does not respond as positively, losing all strength. Unable to walk, she is carried home from the hospital on her sister-in-law's back. She becomes delirious, refusing to take the medicine, but gradually adjusts to it, and there is a brief moment of calm as both women begin their new reality. At this stage, other aspects of Ntombeleni and Danisile's lives are explored: Danisile's strained relationship with her teenage daughter, and the traditional Zulu ceremonies that Ntombeleni's family holds to combat her illness in their own way.

But suddenly, Ntombeleni begins to suffer from an extreme headache. The cause: Meningitis, which is easily treatable when diagnosed; testing is mandatory, but her case was forgotten. She returns to the hospital, and dies there. Ntombeleni's death was preventable. Thus, the story culminates in the bittersweet reality of the epidemic: Danisile lives, treating her survival as a second chance to live through her regrets, and live out her dreams. Ntombeleni dies, falling victim to the overwhelmed medical system. We witness Ntombeleni's eldest daughter at the funeral, wailing as she copes with her grief, and her newfound responsibility for her six younger siblings. Danisile's story ends with photos from her birthday celebration; she explains it is especially important, because it has come during the time of her recovery, and is a symbol for a second chance in life.

Often the magnitude of suffering caused by HIV/AIDS is too great to grasp, and requires personal identification with a single individual; film can be a powerful tool to communicate this understanding. *Thing With No Name* will demonstrate how access to education, support, healthcare, and treatment is the difference between life and death for millions of HIV+ people throughout the world; by putting a face to the statistics, this becomes undeniable.

**Project Timeline:**

We have finished shooting this unique film. The most difficult part is over; now the film must be completed. We are currently in the final stages of post-production and are seeking funds to support completion of the final edit, color correction, score composition, sound mix, and film transfer. We expect completion by September 2007.

**Distribution Strategy:**

The distribution goals for *Thing With No Name* have two distinct parts. The first entails submission to several film festivals, including Sundance, The UN Film Festival, The Amnesty International Human Rights Film Festival, The Havana International Film Festival, and The Toronto Film Festival, whose past selections reflect a strong commitment to social justice in documentary filmmaking. We also have connections to Amnesty International, The Havana International Film Festival, and The Toronto International Film Festival through our past work and through the work of our affiliates.

To raise awareness and funds for the availability and accessibility of HIV/AIDS treatment around the world, national and international broadcast is essential. Two members of our advisory board are affiliated with PBS: Renata Simone, who works with Boston's WGBH public television, and Amy Stechler, who worked with Washington DC's WETA public television on past films. Ground Producer Phumzile Ndlovu has also contributed to numerous South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) programs and will present the film for air within South Africa.

Secondly, a shorter version of *Thing With No Name* will be created for educational purposes within South Africa, and translated into South Africa's 12 official languages. Community centers, schools, and healthcare facilities can integrate *Thing With No Name* into their antiretroviral drug therapy awareness/training sessions. By personally identifying with the subjects of the film, patients can begin their ARV regimen informed about what to expect from the drugs, from their potentially alarming side effects to their greatest reward: a normal, productive life.

These educational programs will begin within the KwaZulu Natal province in two rural sites and one urban site: The Youth Center, the Drakensburg; The Church of Scotland Hospital, Tugela Ferry; and McCords Hospital, Durban. Administrators at these institutions are extremely interested in using the film. Additionally, we have been contacted by Doctors Without Borders, and are connected with The Treatment Action Campaign of South Africa, which lobbied for the free ARV rollout, through Executive Director and *Thing With No Name* advisory board member Zachie Achmat.

*Thing With No Name* began its online distribution campaign in 2005, when [thingwithnoname.org](http://thingwithnoname.org) was launched to generate interest and link activist and health care groups providing HIV/AIDS relief. The trailer can be found on numerous websites, including [MediaRights.org](http://MediaRights.org), and the Social Medicine Portal. An in-depth account of the film's production phase in South Africa is also available at <http://twnn.blogspot.com>.

**Key Personnel:****Sarah Friedland****Director/Producer/Editor**

Sarah Friedland is a New York-based documentary filmmaker and editor. She received her BA from Sarah Lawrence College and continued her studies at the International School for Film and Television in Havana, Cuba. Among other projects, she was Principal Editor on the award-winning documentary *Free to Fly: The US-Cuba Link*, directed by prominent Cuba-based documentarian Estella Bravo. Winner of the Best Film Prize at the Berkeley Film Festival, it was screened at numerous festivals and broadcasted on Cuban television. She was Principal Editor on *The Porcelain Diaries*, included in the 2003 Art Biennial of the Caribbean, and worked as an Assistant Editor on the Emmy-nominated *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo* by Amy Stechler, screened at the Tate Modern and MOMA, and shown on PBS. In 2005, she received a residency in Pont-Aven, France through the Gauguin Museum of Pont-Aven to direct *Breath on the Mirror*, which premiered at the Athens International Film Festival and was shown at the Center for Contemporary Art in Pont-Aven. In 2005, Friedland curated the Amnesty International Firefly Project's Film Festival 'How to Change the World in Short or Feature Length: A Collection of Activist Films'.

**Esy Casey****Director of Photography/****Producer**

After graduating with honors from Parsons School of Design in 2003, Casey collaborated on a Fulbright-sponsored project in Spain to photographically illustrate and produce a book on soil erosion prevention that was distributed by the Institute of Sustainable Agriculture of Córdoba to farmers throughout Andalucía. She has been invited to photograph members of the Navajo Reservation at Chinle, AZ for a tribal Health Awareness Calendar, and continues to freelance in portrait and event photography. Her design work has been featured in numerous publications for Bloomsbury USA/UK, Walker Books, Henry Holt and Company, and the Amnesty International Firefly Project.

**Phumzile Ndlovu****Ground Producer,****South Africa**

Phumzile Ndlovu is a researcher for the University of KwaZulu Natal's HIVAN program, The Center for HIV/AIDS Networking, based in Bergville, South Africa. A powerful community activist in the region, she is the recipient of the Katherine Fleming Award for International Development from The Coady International Institute of Nova Scotia, Canada. Ndlovu has also worked on numerous films and television programs as a Ground Producer, including *Dangerous Myths* by Jill Krueger, and numerous television programs for SABC, The South African Broadcasting Corporation.

**Konrad Kaczmarek****Sound Design**

Konrad Kaczmarek is a Composer, Sound Designer, and Musician in New York City. He holds a B.A. in music from Yale University and a Masters in Electronic Composition from Goldsmiths College, University of London. He works primarily in interactive sound and video performance, which he also teaches at Yale University, The New School University, and Harvestworks Studio in New York. Selected installation shows include: The Stanley Glasser Electronic Music Studio, London; The Chelsea Art Museum, New York; Interface Culture: A Conference on Interactivity and Globalization, Yale University; and The City Gallery, New Haven, CT. In 2006, he was awarded composition residencies at the Atlantic Center for the Arts and at the Banff Centre.

**Advisory Board:**

We are very proud to have the guidance and support of the following individuals:

- **DR. PETER PIOT** Director of UNAIDS
- **ZACHIE ACHMAT** Executive Director, The Treatment Action Campaign, the most prominent AIDS activist organization in South Africa, and Nobel Prize nominee
- **DR. WAFAA EL-SADR** Director, Division of Infectious Diseases at Harlem Hospital, Professor of Clinical Medicine and Epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York
- **DR. GERALD FRIEDLAND** Director of the AIDS Program, Yale School of Medicine
- **JUDITH AUERBACH** Vice President for Policy and Prevention, American Foundation for AIDS Research, Washington DC
- **DR. ROBERT SEBLER** AIDS Researcher at Columbia University
- **PHUMZILE NDLOVU** of HIVAN, Center for HIV/AIDS Networking in Durban, South Africa, outreach worker for the Home Based Care Workers and organizer for the Youth Center in the Drakensburg, South Africa
- **PROFESSOR HOOSIAN COOVADIA VICTOR DAITZ** Chair in HIV/AIDS Research, Professor of Pediatrics, Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine, Durban, South Africa
- **PROFESSOR UMESH LALLOO** Professor of Medicine, Enhancing Care Initiative, Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine, Durban South Africa
- **DR. TONY MOLL** Physician Director of the Philanjalo, Church of Scotland Hospital, Tugela Ferry, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa
- **DEMETRIA ROYALS** Head of the Film Department at Sarah Lawrence College and member of The Director's Guild of America
- **RENATA SIMONE** Documentary filmmaker who has made documentary work for WGBH and *Frontline*, including *The Age of AIDS*
- **AMY STECHLER** Documentary filmmaker who has produced multiple works for PBS, including writing and co-producing early Ken Burns films such as *The Brooklyn Bridge*
- **JILL KRUEGER** Director of the recent documentary *Deadly Myths*, about the myths surrounding HIV/AIDS in South Africa

**Budget Summary:**

*Thing With No Name* is fiscally sponsored by the Downtown Community Television Center (DCTV). Founded in 1972, DCTV has fostered a diverse and inclusive media arts community for over 30 years. DCTV believes that expanding public access to the electronic media arts invigorates our nation's democracy. DCTV is a legal 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Our relationship with DCTV makes all donations to the project tax deductible.

*Thing With No Name* has received three cash grants from The Paul Newman Foundation, The William H. Prusoff Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, and an equipment grant from Sarah Lawrence College. In addition to formal grants, we have received numerous private donations and In-kind donations from people who are interested in supporting our endeavors, and invite you to join us; thank you for your interest and concern.