

Haben Girma and the Fight for Cake

By Anna West





If your dreams are big
But they seem out of reach
Don't give up
Haben Girma has something to teach



Funny enough, the story begins
In Eritrea, a far away land
Before Haben Girma was born
In her parents' motherland

In the rich country
A war broke out
Her family left for America
It was very hard, no doubt



They settled in Oakland
A town known for **activism**
Little did they know
Their future daughter would believe in
altruism

When Haben Girma was born
Her family celebrated
Their smart, baby girl
The little bundle they created



Like her older brother,
She has an illness
She lost her hearing and her sight
But it didn't leave her in stillness

The world around her was **vibrant** and bright
She **marveled** in the joys of life
She had laws protecting her education
And technology-- like an **electronic braille**
device



She left America on a trip
When she was just a teenager
She went to Mali in Africa
In order to help a stranger

She went on a building project
So young people like her could go to school
She knew everyone deserves knowledge
Because being smart is really cool



Haben was on her way to her dream
She wanted to go to university
But most **deafblind** people like Haben
Are met with **adversity**

But guess what?
She went on to college
Haben did it!
She was on a quest for knowledge



Her college was very helpful
They provided books in **braille**
But they wouldn't give her the menu
Not even one detail

Haben didn't want to create a problem
She didn't say a word
But after missing chocolate cake over and over
She knew that she had to be heard



She couldn't imagine other students like her
Who could neither see nor hear
Having to miss out on chocolate cake
That caused her a lot of fear

So she went to the school
In order to take a stand
She demanded a menu
That she could understand



She told them about a law, the Americans
With Disabilities Act

That protects people with disabilities
She said, “The school needs to be more
inclusive

That is one of their responsibilities!”

And the school changed
And became a better place
Haben stood up for herself
And every other disabled student in that
space



Haben Girma knew then and there
What her future would hold
She was to become a **lawyer**
She would break the mold

Girma got into Harvard Law School
She was going to change the school forever
As the first **deafblind** student
She proves that you can never say never



She says that she was inspired
By her family's journey
Their bravery to leave their beloved country
Gave her the confidence to become an **attorney**

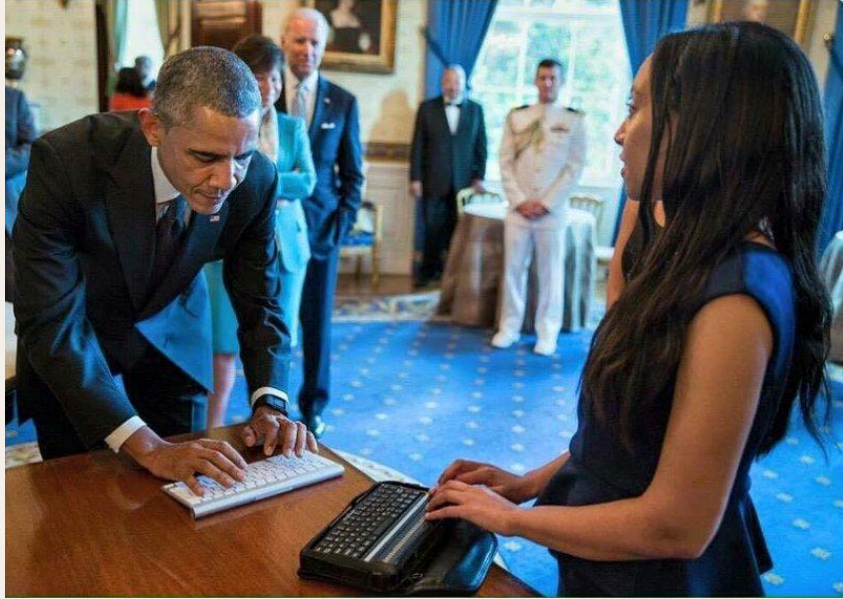
Every day she continues to fight
So that everyone has access to chocolate cake
And equal education and jobs and homes
Haben Girma leaves equality in her **wake**



Haben continues to impress
She says that disability is an opportunity for
innovation

She has invented a new **braille** system
She represents this nation

German Chancellor Merkel, Canadian Prime
Minister Trudeau
Presidents Obama and Clinton all seem to agree
That Haben Girma is changing the world
That's a guarantee!



So when you have a dream
That doesn't seem possible
Remember that Haben Girma
Did the impossible

She reminds us to
Follow our passion
Don't get discouraged
And be full of compassion



The End

Glossary

Activism: the process of using your voice to make changes in the world

Adversity: a moment of difficulty or continued difficulties

Altruism: interest in the well-being of others

Americans With Disabilities Act: a law that doesn't allow discrimination based on disability

Attorney: a lawyer

Glossary

Braille: a system of writing that uses small bumps so blind people can read and write

Deafblind: someone who can neither see nor hear

Electronic braille device: a machine that lets people read a computer in braille

Guarantee: a promise

Inclusive: someone or something that does not leave any part or group out

Innovation: the process of making new ideas

Glossary

Marveled: filled with surprise and joy

Vibrant: bright and lively

Wake: effects

Discussion Questions

1. What is something that you're passionate about?
2. How do you share your passions?
3. Have you ever done something that you didn't think you could do?
4. How do you stand up for others?