



## 25 years since Ali initiated feeding scheme

This Easter will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a feeding scheme launched by former world heavyweight boxing champion, Muhammad Ali for the homeless in Durban. With Ali was Solly Manjra who cooked several degs of breyani and Iqbal Sabat who a quarter of a century later is still feeding the destitute in the Durban Casbah district.

Ali arrived in South Africa on a Mission of Peace to stop the political violence, which raged even more viciously in KwaZulu-Natal. For a voluntary feeding scheme, it must be something of a record, which today feeds more than 300 people a nourishing meal. Among the beneficiaries are refugees, the unemployed, the homeless and those who have been abandoned by their families. Mr Sabat said that it was the single most inspirational moment in his life, which launched him into a lifetime of volunteer public service.

"I think about that day how we got started and here was probably the most recognized Muslim in the world at that time was amongst us in Alice Street dishing up food for the indigent. Since then we provide hot meals five days a week to anyone who comes to our kitchen hungry. A quarter of a century is about to pass as we continue to serve anyone who needs a meal," said Mr Sabat.

Mr Manjra, who was just 44 years old at the time, said that he has a photograph of that event when Ali opened the lid of the deg and served the very first meal. "It is an event which I cannot forget. Here was an international celebrity who had no qualms of serving the poor out in the street. I have not seen anything like that and my family has more than a century service in the food business. It was a moment of great inspiration and I continue to cook daily for my customers and for anyone who is hungry. Money is not all. It is being service. That was the lesson that Ali taught us," said Mr Manjra. He said that he did not remember how many people were fed, but Ali insisted in serving each person, despite the long queues.

After making sure that every person was fed, Ali went to visit KwaMashu and Chesterville to be among the poorer members of the Durban community, saying that he needed to be among the poor to remind him that his place was not with Royalty, but amongst the humble people of the world.

Solly Manjra has gone on to become Durban's most famous and sought after caterer. Both Manjra and Sabat (featured above with Muhammad Ali) are continuing to serve and feed the poor and maintaining the tradition set by Ali.



## Ali Abunimah comes to SA

Prominent Palestinian American journalist, activist, media-analyst, author, Ali Abunimah arrives in Johannesburg on Monday. He will deliver lectures in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. However Durban residents will not get the opportunity to hear his message. A spokesman for the organisers said that his trip had been planned to include only the three cities.

He is also co-founder of the widely acclaimed and award-winning online publication **The Electronic Intifada**. A graduate of Princeton University and the University of Chicago, Mr Abunimah has authored "One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse" and "The Battle for Justice in Palestine". He is also the recipient of the 2013 Lannan Cultural Freedom Fellowship Award. Ali Abunimah's mother is originally from the Palestinian village of Lifta but became a refugee in the 1948 Israeli expulsion of indigenous Palestinians from their homeland. His father is from the village of Battir, now in the Palestinian West Bank, and served as a diplomat at the UN. Herewith details of his program:

**TUESDAY 13 MARCH, 18H30** Graduate Seminar Room, East Campus, Wits University, Johannesburg enquire 0817403838

**WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH, 13H00** Building 123, South Campus, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth Hosts: Centre for the Advancement of Non-racialism and Democracy

**THURSDAY 15 MARCH 18H00** at New Lecture Theatre Building, Upper Campus, UCT, Cape Town Hosts UCT PSF, PSA UWC and others enquire 0826955659

**FRIDAY 16 MARCH 18H00** at 28 Sir Lowry Road, Foreshore, Cape Town Hosts Palestine Museum, PSC,

**SATURDAY 17 MARCH 11H00** Introduction to Palestine solidarity at Isivivana Centre, Khayelitsha Hosts Equal Education

## Hunt for Unsung Heroes launched by Deputy Mayor Peer

Durban's Deputy Mayor, Mrs Fawzia Peer has launched a project to record the histories and honour unsung heroes who have performed yeoman service to the community.

At a meeting, which she hosted in the Mayor's Parlour, City Hall, Mrs Peer said that it was imperative that the histories of people who made great sacrifices to serve had to be recorded for posterity. "We must also honour them and it is my intention to have a major function where each of our unsung heroes would be presented with a special award. While the final details are yet to be worked out, we have started work to identify these luminaries who have been forgotten," said Mrs Peer.

The first step is to launch a cultural organization, which will undertake the project. The next move will be to identify the unsung heroes, men women. This will be followed with each one being interviewed and their journeys will be reduced to writing. A total of 16 people attended the very first meeting. Most of them affiliated with a host of volunteer public service organisations. It was agreed that a draft constitution would be prepared and presented

to the Committee at its very next meeting on March 20.

Also at the meeting was businesswoman, Mrs Faranah Osman who said that there are many people within the community who have given selfless service, but who have been ignored when it came to recognizing their contribution. "These luminaries continue to work to bring comfort, change and leadership among so many. Let us also not forget that there are many Muslim women who are forgotten because society expects them to be passive. We need to highlight these people or history will forget our contribution and our generation will go down as a people who did not make a contribution," said Mrs Osman.

The hunt is now on for the unsung heroes and they need not have made a contribution to the liberation struggle but have worked tirelessly in various fields of human endeavor like public health, economics, education, philanthropy, science, social welfare and the professions.

**Names and contact details of prospective unsung heroes can be sent to farook@mweb.co.za**

## Shaheena Meer - Social Media can be a positive influence

While social media has a negative image, Blogger Shaheena Meer said it is a portal of communication, which she uses to heal people, in an interview on Radio Al Ansar's talk show, 90 Minutes. Blogger, humanitarian, motivational speaker, craft and life skills expert, Ms Meer said that she has been able to reach out to people, many of whom have thanked her for the comfort she has brought into their respective lives. "I write without any inhibition and from my innermost self. I feel that what I write is a clean energy and there are people who respond to me daily with gratitude. They identify with the issues which I highlight and that they draw comfort," said Ms Meer.

Social media is a tool which when used properly has many advantages and could be reached people who might be isolated, and that it could bring hope to those who might believe that they do not have a future. More than anything else, it could save lives.

Many people use it to slander, create suspicion, divisions and pry on people who are weak, dismayed and those who have lost faith in the human element. "Every tear washes a wound. Every one is a spiritual being living a human experience. We need more humility in our lives. Respect and trust must be cultivated. It need not be this way and it could also be used to educate the youth, inculcate in them a culture of respect, caring, love, inspiration and confidence. More good can be nurtured through social media than the evil it is purported to spread."

She said that there were many women and men who are suffering in silence who do not know how to cope with their tribulations and do not have anyone whom they could talk to express themselves. "I have found a portal of communication in social media and while here is much negativity, I have been able to carve out a very positive channel in which I have been able to reach many people. I tell my readers

that they must be grateful for each day when they rise in the morning and that all of us are blessed with at least five gifts daily. Just getting up in the morning is a gift for which we must be grateful. Opening your eyes in the morning and have vision is another gift. The fact that you can get out of bed and stand unattended is yet another gift followed by going to the bathroom and finding that your vital organs are functioning properly."

Now she is working on a book, which is a collection of her writings on social media. But she said that she would like to concentrate on parent-children relationships, which she said was being eroded by disrespect. Children in the present era seem to take their parents for granted and that one of the best avenues to get to the youngsters is through social media. "Our society have emotional problems and they use materialism to find a cure for the crisis which is besetting many homes. Plying their off springs with material comforts is certainly not going to improve conditions in the home," she said.

Speaking about her crafts and life skills programmes which she runs on the beachfront, Ms Meer pointed out that classes are held for various groups and one of the most popular was courses which she hosts for women. "Many of them do not have any idea of changing a flat tyre, others cannot unblock a drain. Then there are those who do not know how to knit or sew. These are simple things, yet there is such a huge gap. Often these issues cause a great deal of tension in the home. I do things that fulfill me and this is true of other people as well."

Her fine art classes are also a big hit, not only by adults, but also among the youth who want to be able to acquire skills, which will stimulate them. A computer game has its limitations too. "I find these class in which I accommodate between 15 and 20 people to be very fulfilling and gives me a sense of satisfaction when people tell me that they have been able to put the skills that



they have learnt to good use."

She said that there was a wide range of skills which many women were now acquiring, especially since there is a growing number of single mothers who carry the responsibility of providing shelter, food, clothing and medical care for children and the elderly.

While at one time, holding an academic qualification was the only education, which was sought after, now it is skills, which are in demand. She has had plumbers; motor mechanics and electricians who have featured in her classes and with them came knowledge, which has added independence in the lives of many people.

Ms Meer is planning a series of lectures, workshops and classes, which she hopes will offer solutions to people who are isolated, who lack basic skills and those who know that they desperately need to acquire the ability to ensure the sustainability of their respective families.

**Farook Khan - 90 Minutes on Radio Al Ansar - 10 March 2018**

## Vote for your SGB urges SAMNET

The South African Muslim Network (SAMNET) calls on the Muslim community to actively participate in School Governing Bodies (SGB) Elections to be held across SA Public Schools early March.

In a statement released this week, the Network pointed out that these elections are legislated to be held every three years at the tens of thousands of Public schools. There have been proposals to extend the term of SGBs. "SGBs are critical to the functioning and operation of Public schools. It is our opinion and that of those we have engaged that we can positively influence school education in South Africa. It is important for Muslims to be active in the civil structures of South Africa. Our legislation and education systems encourages participation of communities in their schools and we would lose by not using this opportunity especially more so now as legislation on SGB powers is under review."

The statement went on: "It needs to be noted that the majority of our Muslim students are NOT in Private/Islamic/Majority Muslim schools. In light of this we need to consider the importance of participation and representation."

Over the past few years SAMNET has assisted and come to know of a number of instances involving students, parents and teachers where there have been uncompromising or even hostile incidents with schools. "Many of these have been with SGBs or principals. In most cases a visible presence & engaged parent body would have been beneficial. If parents are not involved proactively it makes mediation more difficult should it be needed. Conversely there are many instances where Muslims have built a reputation on SGBs or through building relationships for their contributions. Schools have been able to facilitate the reasonable accommodation of Muslims and other communities."

SAMNET have also identified Educators, SGB Chairpersons and SGB members who can share their experiences and knowledge and are able to advise accordingly. "Arrangements can be made via our office for interviews, telecons or possible meetings. We ask that you provide us with feedback and ideas that could be shared across our Network to make this a successful and inclusive SGB Election year."

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Discover Yourself: 2-day intensive workshop by Sadathullah Khan in Durban, 17/18 March. For more information contact Mr Gani on 074 299 0786