

18. Denis Goldberg – a Face of Africa

By Karin Kopshoff, Davina Donaldson, Christine Link

‘Dear Mr Goldberg, I enjoyed your lecture very much, because you introduced us to all kinds of details. We did not know a lot of it before and you answered all our questions and listened to us.’ (Pupil of Class 9a of Volksgarten Comprehensive School, Monchengladbach).

Again and again Denis Goldberg has affected young and old with his friendliness and his open-mindedness in relation to all people – regardless of age, social status, nationality, skin colour – and more than anything else, won them to his cause.

Since the beginning of the project ‘Faces of Africa’ in 2009, Denis Goldberg is one of the first ‘faces’ to support our work. He is the ideal ambassador to convey the aims of the project: a well-balanced and differentiated picture of the African continent as well as insights into the living conditions and experiences of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

First Karin Kopshoff and since 2011 Christine Link and Davina Donaldson have organised Denis’s lecture tours throughout the Federal Republic. Frequently people who knew Denis in South Africa or elsewhere and had learned to value him had asked us to give other people the opportunity to learn of Denis’s partly shocking story and to allow his very individual description of the history of his country to affect them.

Again and again Denis Goldberg has succeeded in linking excerpts and reports from his own life history in a surprising way with information about the history of the Anti-Apartheid movement and the freedom struggle of the ANC. He also always emphasizes the huge challenges faced in achieving a change of society to a democratic state with equal rights for all people after the end of Apartheid. The striking and thoughtful recounting of his own motives, free from bitterness,

remains particularly long in the memories of participants young and old.

Almost unique is also Denis's readiness to talk about very personal matters. For example, about the privations and problems resulting for his family from his continuous absence. His daughter once said, "Maybe freedom fighters shouldn't have families." Moved by this open account, a schoolgirl admitted at a meeting in Duesseldorf that she herself had suffered for years from what she had seen as neglect and apparent lack of love from her father who had committed himself to the struggle for equal rights for Kurdistan. Denis Goldberg's frank words awakened in her a better understanding for her father and his involvement.

Because he is so convincing, Denis Goldberg fills 'long-accepted' judgments with new life, amongst them the realization that abuses and injustices do not have to be accepted, but that it is worthwhile becoming active oneself. Because change is possible! At the same time Denis always makes clear that this is as true for the countries in the north as for those in the south of the globe. In particular he makes the responsibility of each individual for achieving a peaceful, just and equal co-existence of all people seem obvious again. Therefore young people as well as adults see him as a modern example who leaves behind a profound impression and even gives many a person the impetus to become involved.

Denis Goldberg's infectious humour has a further effect. He commented on our internet site www.gesichter-afrikas.de: "I logged on to it and was amazed by the exciting way it presents so many interesting things of life in Africa: people, music, art, economy (...) all at the click of a mouse."

We are happy and proud to have found in Denis Goldberg such a great ambassador for our project. For the future and on your birthday, we wish you the best in every imaginable way, continuing energy and good health to fulfil more projects. Denis, we look forward to more hours together with you, in which you can let us and everyone share in your life, your experiences and your thoughts.

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