## A personal Tribute to an Iconic Eritrean teacher & Entertainer “Alamin Abdeletif”.

Legendary entertainer, teacher and nationalist Alamin Abdeletif began his career by singing at small events and public celebrations. From his humble beginnings in the Abashawil district of Asmara to his life in the diaspora and finally back to his beloved Eritrea, he has always remained humble and kind. Like most patriotic Eritreans he joined the Mahber Theater Asmara also known as MTA (Matta) to help educate and maintain the Eritrean culture despite very tough circumstances under Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea. The history of his talent can be shared by many who have nothing but praise for his gentle personality. I wanted to share an experience in this journey we know as life as I had the opportunity to meet him up close and personally, when I was a young man living in the middle east.

It was in the late 70’s and as an avid listener of tigrinia and tigre songs in my house hold that my parents and their friends played on their tape recorders, I was especially mesmerized by a song that was titled “Nay Akal Vitamin, Nay Hilina Haili”. The composition, the beat, the voice & the message that went along with it has been stuck in mind since I was little. Even though I became aware that the song had political messages later on in life, I was blessed to be educated on the struggle for independence thanks to the message from that song and its subliminal message. The loose translation of the song “A vitamin for the body & a power for inspiration” said it all. He used a plant analogy that expressed one to be healthy during a rough time in Eritrean politics as he tactfully shares information about the injustices that took place against our people following the annexation of Eritrea to Ethiopia by the United nations.

After I left Eritrea and arrived in Sudan thanks to the kindness and full support of the Eritrean freedom fighters of the ELF at the time whom some have now become full fledged members of the EPLF and members of the Eritrean government, It was off to the middle east where upon arrival to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, I met Memhir Alamin. The man was very elegant and always smiling. When he spoke to you with his crisp voice, you felt a sense of ease. While staying at a family friend’s house where Memhir Alamin also happened to share in a nice district of Jeddah City which was a sprawling metropolis at the the time, I and my brother along with a close family friend decided to take the keys of the brand new 1978 Mitsubishi Lancer as the legend took his afternoon nap. As underage boys driving without a licence throughout this huge city, with the family friend at the helm of the driver’s seat, we made our way back to the home late. Safe but very scared for doing the unthinkable, we thought we would get in trouble but the kind and gentle soul that Memhir Alamin was, he spared us the spanking by saying “as long as you did not wreck it is fine” but please don’t ever attempt this act ever again. He proceeded to take us with him and bought us goodies to eat without showing any signs of anger. I cherish the one month I got to spend with him while I stayed in Jeddah. He was a good man with a generous personality.

Many years later, I once again got a chance to live within the same community as memhir Alamin in the DMV area. After I made my way back home from many years of living in the south of the United States where I went to college. He was a very integral part of our DMV community and he was always humble. He always came to our former ECCC on 6Th & L streets, NW with some very wise and sound advice. He always would recall the time we met in Saudi Arabia and always shared his passion for Eritrea with me and my friends. Even though he did not take to the stage all the time, every time he came on it there was some type of gratification by the crowd. His songs are all timeless and his charisma and voice had people dancing to all of his tunes. During the border war in the late 1990’s one of his song sums it up with the very first word “Lomi, Kemtimali, Hager Seb Alowa” in reference to Eritrea’s committed children who will defend the nation forever. The song was timely then and it is timely today. When Memhir Alamin was planning on moving back to Eritrea, he always shared his ideas and encouraged us to support our nation unconditionally. On most Saturday afternoons after soccer practice we would see him at our ECCC and he would come and join us to chat, tell jokes or educate us about life and his desire to see a strong youth with all the Eritrean values that were left by those who paid a heavy price.

We should be Thankful to a man that we as Eritreans have been blessed to know and share a life with. Even on my many trips to Eritrea, I got the chance to speak to him on many occasions. He was truly an Eritrean treasure and his legacy must continue through his songs and he persona.

Rest in Peace! Memhir….

Michael Seium