

'Gaza doctor' to speak at Diversity Breakfast

BY LISA BECKWICK

A THREE-TIME Nobel Peace Prize nominee will share his message of peace at this year's Diversity Thunder Bay breakfast celebration.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, also known as the Gaza Doctor, will deliver the keynote address at this year's breakfast on March 20 in Thunder Bay.

Dr. Abuelaish gained international attention after Israeli shells struck his home in the Gaza Strip on Jan. 16, 2009, killing three of his daughters and one of his nieces.

This heartbreaking loss came only four months after Dr. Abuelaish lost his wife to cancer.

However, Dr. Abuelaish didn't seek revenge or succumb to hatred. Instead, he wrote a deeply personal book called *I Shall Not Hate*, which has since become an international best-seller.

Dr. Abuelaish hopes his daughters will be the last sacrifice on the road to peace, and in his book calls on the people of the Middle East to start talking to each other.

"In every community where there is racism and discrimination, we need to begin to build bridges through understanding, compassion, respect and communication," Dr. Abuelaish has said.

Dr. Abuelaish has delivered his message around the world. He's addressed Canada's House of Commons, the European Parliament, and the United States Congress.

Dr. Abuelaish has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Award three times, and has received many other accolades for his work, including the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award of Canada, the Order of Ontario, the Calgary



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Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

Peace Prize and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Dr. Abuelaish is also the founder and president of the Daughters for Life Foundation, a Canadian charity that provides awards and scholarships to young women in the Middle East in memory of his slain daughters. His aim in establishing the foundation was to give other young women the opportunity to fulfill his daughters' dreams for an educated future, and help them act as agents of change in the journey towards peace.

Dr. Abuelaish lives with his five children in Toronto where he is an associate professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. As a doctor and an educator, his teachings focus on tangible and realistic ways of promoting health as a strategy to building peace.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed on March 21 every year. It was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 as a way to remember the 1960 Sharpeville mas-

sacre, during which 69 peaceful demonstrators were killed by South African police as they protested the country's unjust apartheid laws.

Each year on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries, but despite much progress, racism continues to exist and to affect the lives of individuals, as well as ethnic and religious groups, worldwide. Racism violates our human rights and our communities suffer from the injustice.

To join us on this journey for peace, attend Diversity Thunder Bay's eighth annual Inter-

national Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Celebration Breakfast, which will take place on March 20 from 7:30-9 a.m., at the Victoria Inn.

Dr. Abuelaish will be available for a book signing after the event. Purchase your tickets online at diversitythunderbay.ca.

Diversity Thunder Bay is a grassroots, community-based organization whose mission is to work towards an equitable community free of racism and discrimination of any kind.

Lisa Beckwick is the director of Organizational and People Development for St. Joseph's Care Group, is co-chair for the breakfast celebration, and has been a member of Diversity Thunder Bay since 2005. 02.03.14



JOHN KENNEY, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Palestinian Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, will speak in Thunder Bay later this month.