

Look, no hands! // Small Talk



When someone told Nadeem Omar to go back to the jungle, he spoke to him over coffee and they became friends. Shows, tours and conversations he has had prove, to his opinion, that nonviolent protests work.

You are going to speak in the "[Hole in a Brick Wall](#)" conference, dealing with nonviolent protests and resistance. Was your resistance in Sudan against the regime nonviolent? Did it work?

Yes, it worked great inside the university. It was also very, very nice when we talked to the students there and when we would go out and talk to people in the neighborhood. There are many people in Sudan using arms to bring about change. We resisted that and said that there was a better chance for us to talk and change the situation without using arms. We used all sorts of tools - plays, musicals, university groups where we started working and talking on campus.

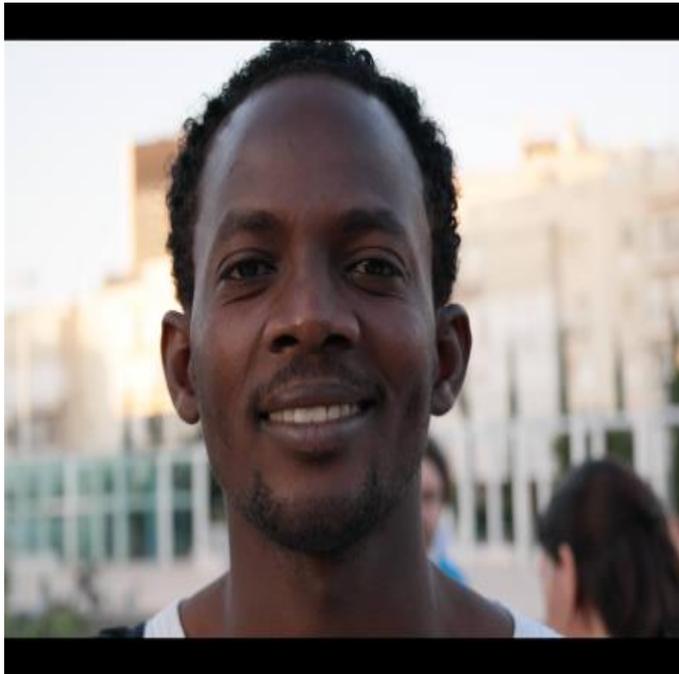
Why did you come running here, then?

The regime does not want these things to happen, so they kill people. In 2010, they killed a friend of mine during an event on campus. I went into hiding and was wanted until I left the country.

Tell me about the play "One Strong Black."

Ever since I came here, everywhere I go - down the street, on the bus, in the taxi -

people do not even know why we came here. I was in a taxi once, and the driver asked me: "Why did you come here, then? We have a small country; there are enough problems here; why didn't you stay in Egypt?" I spoke to my friends and said: "We have to do something. The Israelis don't even know why we're here." I said we had to do some theater. At first it was extremely difficult - many people did not even know what theater was. I wasn't that much of an actor, either. But there was no other way about it - it was the only thing we could do to tell our stories. We managed to build this group. We gave 16 performance all over the country, in universities, schools."



One of your actors was arrested.

His name is Babi; he is from Uganda. He works on Neveh Sha'nan street. There was a bike tied to a post out on the street, and cops who were passing by asked him whose bike it was. Babi said he did not have the slightest idea. They confused him saying "it's yours" or "it isn't yours". He got arrested and

spent a month in prison. We held the [Free Babi](#) campaign and managed to get him out of jail. However, other people got summoned to the Holot detention camp. So, yes, the Population and Immigration Authority managed to tear our group apart. We are now trying to recruit new players.

What are you going to talk about in the conference?

I want to talk about nonviolent struggles. It is based on the story of Africans here, and on the tools we used in order to explain to people about our plights and about the daily problems we encounter. When there were lots of protests, between the end of 2013 and April [of 2014], one of the things we would always do before going to a protest telling people: "Whatever anyone says to you on the street, reply by saying 'Thank you, I love you'." When you go to a protest and get calls like "Black, nigger, murderer, go away"... We did not reply to these calls, we would just smile and carry on. This is why our protests were not violent at all - it was because we explained exactly what the participants could do. I want to talk about the things we did in our struggle here in this country.

When you consider the treatment you get from Israelis, do you think the nonviolent struggle worked?

Yes, it works. Israelis - I'm not talking about the government, but rather the Israeli society - still do not know exactly why we are here, what made us come here. The media has a great effect on people here, and they do not know anything. Some people tell you "you are just an infiltrator". There is a great deal of verbal violence on the street here. Three months ago, a guy I walked past said: "You're a nigger. You stink. Go back to Africa. Go back to the jungle." I told him: "I want to invite you for a cup of coffee." He agreed to have coffee together and I told him my personal story, about why I am here in the country. Now we are facebook friends. Sometimes he calls me. This person who once used these very bad words with me has now become a friend, almost a friend. So, yes, I think this stuff works if we keep on smiling.

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