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How to Spread It: Marwa El Daly

Charlotte Bauer @City_Press

14 July 2013 6:00

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Marwa El Daly

Marwa El Daly is the founder and chairperson of the [Waqfeyat al Maadi Community Foundation](#) in Egypt. Updating the concept of waqf, a centuries old form of philanthropy in the Arabic and Islamic tradition, her foundation is a community led trust that shifts giving from charity to development.

City Press caught up with El Daly before the violent protests last week. Post revolution, her organisation plays an important role in Egypt around public accountability. In 2012 she received the African

TALKING POINT



CARIEN DU PLESSIS Those calling for Zuma's head over Nkandla must also be held accountable – S'dumo Dlamini

Those who want to hold President Jacob Zuma to account for Nkandla should first "remove the log from their own face", Cosatu president S'dumo Dlamini has said.

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Grantmakers Network African Philanthropy Award. Social justice is her passion. She lives in Cairo.

Q: Since the 2011 revolution in Egypt, has it been harder or easier for your organisation to attract funds?

A: The revolution was the greatest landmark in our history. It was the spark that brought all of us together and made us realise that we can make miracles together. Waqfeyat al Maadi Community Foundation's job became easier in post-revolution Egypt because people found this body where they can make change happen. Mobilising people for talks, clean ups and fundraising for projects became easier because the sense of belonging and determination made people come to us in hundreds, not us going to them – Waqfeya became the place that they trusted would give them a place to express their love for the community.

Q: You have been recognised as a “social entrepreneur”. What is that?

A: Yes, I was recognised by Ashoka (a global organisation that invests in social entrepreneurs) in 2007 and in 2011, by Synergos (a New York based organisation addressing poverty and social injustice) as an Arab World Social Innovator. Ashoka recognised me for my philanthropic work in the region and for creating the first model of a community foundation that revives the waqf endowment model. This is a traditional form of giving that was the backbone of civil society until the 19th century that started to completely fade out in the 50s of the 20th century, when the government became the sole provider of services – even for charity. Synergos selected me as a social entrepreneur for my effort in mobilising youth for change-driven philanthropy.

Q: If community philanthropy starts at home, where is home for you?

A: Home for me is “us” wherever we are – it is the strengths and resources that we have no matter what the challenges are. As a child at school I realised the importance of being responsible for the wellbeing of our family, community and all the people who are less fortunate. It was my mother who inspired me through good education that we cannot sleep well if our neighbour is hungry. It was not about giving our neighbour food, because she taught me that if giving them food undermines their dignity, then we do them more harm than good. So it was about creating an avenue for them to be able to get their own food with dignity and pride. It was about the bonds that allow us to find solutions together, the

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Nelson Mandela would have been appalled at the Afrikaner community's exclusion from his funeral, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has said, also questioning the leading role handed to the ruling ANC. I think ...

- I agree with Tutu: the most blatant exclusion was that of the Afrikaner community
- What about the people of Qunu?
- The ANC had the right to play a leading role
- Tutu loves attention too much

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trust and belief in our strengths and the conviction that giving to empower each other empowers all of us. [Polls Archive](#)

Q: Is your interest in youth projects informed by your own relative youth?

A: It's not that I'm interested in "youth projects" but youth are integral partners of Waqfeyat al Maadi CF. They are not our target group, but our partners. In the Youth Engagement Project, youths decide our community projects, design them, fundraise for them and support their implementation. They support other social entrepreneurs and give them whatever psychological and financial support they can. The board comprises younger and older generations, female and male, different religions. As a young woman, although now in my 30s, I feel we are all young – a young vibrant organisation where age plays no role but where there is a young spirit that believes in change.

Q: The Waqfeyat al Maadi Community Foundation uses art to bridge divides and bring diverse youth together. How does it do this?

A: The first project at Waqfeyat al Maadi CF was launched by Dr Fatma Abou Nawareg – my mother. She is the former dean and current Professor of Art Appreciation at Helwan University, who inaugurated the Khan el Fenoun art education project as a tool to attract community members of all ages in a peaceful and beautiful environment. It was also an income-generating project endowed to allow the less fortunate to have the same opportunity to art education in a sustainable manner because of Dr Fatma's belief that art is the tool that shapes appreciation of our environment, thinking, and the ability to change from an early age. Last but not least, the art workshop brings people from privileged and underprivileged communities together in collective art works that they exhibit together. This creates bonds and mutual respect and pride, but also creates individuals that are more sensitive to each other's feelings and challenges.

Q: Are you an arts lover?

A: I do love the arts myself, yes – Dr Fatma is both my mother and my inspiration. Appreciating arts provides the soul with sensitivity to nature, trees, vegetables, mountains, animals, insects and, of course, to human beings. I love drawing and photography and find them powerful tools to bring inner strengths and an eye to the environment around us.

Q: What kind of philanthropist would you describe yourself as?

A: I am a believer in social justice philanthropy, where giving in any form is directed to solve root causes of poverty, deprivation or any kind of injustice. My interest is to invest in change-driven philanthropy that brings people out of the vicious circle of poverty and dependence and helps them have equal access to opportunities and resources.

Q: You're active on the digital social networks – Facebook, Twitter etc. Does this help to spread the word and your work?

A: I am very active on social media – and WMCF counts on Facebook and Twitter to mobilise people and we have more than 3000 active followers who participate in our community carnivals, events and fundraise for Waqfeya projects. For us social media is an integral part of our work – it connects not only our communities but also connects us globally with other community foundations and youth groups. All our photo albums are on Facebook and this allows for visibility and engagement.

Q: What was your first philanthropy project and how did it make you feel?

A: My first project was in my school years and it was a series of libraries that we helped establish in underprivileged areas and in children's hospitals in Egypt, especially the cancer-treatment centers. We used books to get children to become philanthropists and give away their books. We gathered thousands from us – teen philanthropists – and created many libraries across Egypt and organised school trips to them. I was 12 years old, and the inspiration was my mother who always guided me with three secret words: love, commitment and justice for all.

» This series is developed in partnership with the Southern Africa Trust

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Hazem Rashed · 5 months ago

The model Marwa has geniously applied is applicable in all communities. I hope that it will be so that we can move forward to a better world.

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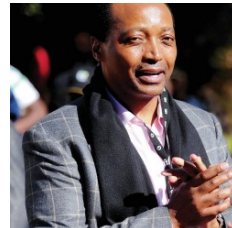
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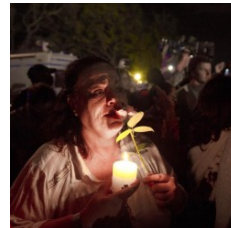
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