

ABDOU'S SALOON

Abdou's saloon is one of a couple of barber shops owned and run by deaf people in the Greater Banjul Area. It is located at Latrikunda Sabiji urban settlement on the Westfield – Brikama highway. It is exactly located at a point where a street is junked to this highway, and very close to the nearest elf petrol station .The area is well lit due to the concentration of street lights there, and its being at the heart of the urban settlement. Most people living in the town pass by there on their way to and from work, shopping, medical centers, schools, and the public playground and park. Another advantage the location of Abdou's Saloon is that one has a clear view of the many pedestrians and vehicles that ply along and across the highway. These facts combined with Deaf friendly attitudes gradually adopted and demonstrated by the Hearing inhabitants of the area made Abdu's Saloon an ideal meeting place "Bantaba" for Deaf people. Passersby could be seen cracking jokes with familiar faces among the Deaf persons seated there on wooden benches and often in a circle.

They hang around the place (at times in large numbers) almost every day of the week, especially between the hours of 3.00 pm and midnights. Deaf youths who has the opportunity , come from as far away as Bakau, old Jeswang, Sukuta, Busumbala and even Brikama to satisfy their desire for interaction, and other social needs.

At Abdou's Saloon it is not just about exchanging information on football matches, TV news, internet experiences,, school life, work life, family issues, but also about travelling to Europe on the back-way. Deaf

people who gather there also discuss past present upcoming social activities such as festivals, naming and marriage ceremonies, football marches, political rallies, employment opportunities, fundraising for Deaf clubs. Discussions are much more interesting when there is China tea “ataya” being brewed and drank

Today is Saturday. Masanneh planned to go early to Abdou’s Saloon because he wanted to discuss the next football march with his team members and the only place they could easily meet is Abdou’s saloon. Masanneh also has an appointment there with his new hearing girlfriend, whom he met last Saturday, at their football match against a hearing team. Masanneh happened to have scored the goal that brought about a (1-0) defeat of their opponent- a Hearing team. He must go to Latrikunda Sabiji today’ ’he thought to himself. He has only D10.00 in his pocket which he preferred to reserve for “ataya” at Abdou’s workshop because it is his turn to buy sugar and China tea that is used to brew the stuff. He felt like dressing in his only decent looking jean trousers. His younger sister had washed it for him the previous day but got ruffled and he has no other money to buy Charcoal for ironing. so he decided to fold the trousers neatly and put it under pressure under his mattress over the night to stretch it.

“It is time to go now” Masanneh said to himself. He checked his dressing through the mirror of a broken old car packed beside his house. He adjusted his baseball cap and tightens his belt. He thought of taking dinner before he go, but it was not ready then. “I must go now” he thought to himself again. He preferred to go hungry than miss an opportunity to meet his girlfriend.

When Masanneh finally arrived at Abdou's saloon, he met Ebrima and Kemo who left their homes early with the hope of finding something at the saloon to eat or drink, or enjoy because they were all very hungry. They missed dinner at home.

Kemo was with somebody in the neighboring compound when his family announced dinner but Kemo was nowhere to be found. When he later arrived home he saw the last drop of "chereh" (local food made from grains of millet or maize) being cleared from the big basin by his hearing youngest brother. He was angered by this, but what could he do? There was no more food to eat, and he had no money to buy a piece of bread and butter. As for Ebrima, he was fed up with eating porridge which his family cooked often as they could not afford better meals. This evening he rushed out of his home with rag upon realizing that today also is porridge.

"Eh Kemo! Take five" Masanneh greeted in sign Language. "All good", Kemo answered swiftly with a thumb up, but uninterestedly and without any facial expression to support his action. As for Ebrima, he just nodded in response. The three young men sat by the door of Abdou's saloon while Abdou himself was busy barbing clients. He works alone in the shop, and appreciated the company of other deaf people, but said he did not need an interpreter to facilitate his communicate with his hearing clients He has pinned all kinds of headshot photos of various hair cutting styles in his shop. So all he needs to do when a hearing customer appeared there is to direct his attention to the photographs on the walls , and ask him to choose the hair cutting style he prefers. Upon a customer's selection of his preference, Abdou himself would point to a corresponding price list. If the price is agreed upon, Abdou would immediately embark on the hair

cutting. For his fellow Deaf people, he charges less price. fellow deaf friends , he served them at reduced prices.

Kutubo (a boy) and sally (a girl) are friends. Both of them live in Latrikunda Sabiji not far from Abdou's saloon and are both grade 8 students of the school for the Deaf. "To night they are free to go out. They have nothing to do and nothing to enjoy either. They might as well go to Abdou's workshop to pour out their grievances to the older deaf boys and girls whom, they are sure could understand them much better than their own parents.

Kutubo and Sally and the other students in Miss Jobe's class at the Deaf school were punished by another teacher, Mr. Keita, on Friday. They felt very bitter about it. Miss Jobe has just graduated from the Gambia teachers Training College and has been teaching there for only 3 months. She has never taught deaf children before and had no special training for the task. She first entered the classroom with a bang, hoping to achieve much success with the children than her predecessor. Her brilliant performance at the college stirred her confidence into believing that she could work successfully with even the special need children. She used to prepare her lesson notes carefully to make lessons interesting. However, now she seemed unsure of herself. She is losing confidence in her own ability to teach. She could neither sign nor understand the sign language used by her students. This made things worse for her. The students can copy notes from the board, and can draw diagrams well, but did not understand what they were being taught even after repeating explanations over and over again. At times Miss Jobe would cry out in anger, rush out to call another teacher to come to her aid. On Friday she calls Mr Dukureh for help with explaining 'Digestive System'. The previous lesson was

about ‘Parasitic worms’, which she managed alone. It was better understood by the students, but this one certainly is challenging. Many of the teachers believe Mr. Dukureh who had been teaching at the school for 4 years now is the best when it comes to communication with the Deaf children.

Mr. Dukureh,, upon request, left his own class and immediately appeared in Miss Job’s class and started explaining the digestive process in sign supported English. However, at the end of the period he resorted to slapping the student here and there, and throwing blackboard dusters on their faces.as he was annoyed and discouraged. He was also ashamed of his failure in front of Miss Jobe. He stood by the classroom door and breathed a deep sigh. “Not only did he want to have success with the students but he also want to win the admiration of Miss Jobe who is nice looking with round buttocks and slender legs. But now all is spoilt” he thought to himself. He turns to Miss Jobe and said, “You see! Deaf people are cows! They never understand anything!”

The fact of the matter was that after Dukureh painstakingly tried a hand at the explanation, he called the students one by one to repeat explaining what they had learned. Most of the students mistook the intestine for a large tape worn which, Miss Jobe told them in the previous lesson. They were taught that it lives in people’s stomach and eat their food.

Students in their explanation would say “when you eat food it goes down to the stomach, but the big tape worm that is attached to the stomach take all the food which moves through its body coils and finally come out through the anus as waste matter.

So at Abdou's saloon, Kutubo and Sally have something to tell. However, upon arrival there, they forget all about it. Instead their attention was diverted by the news of "Ebola" which was being discussed at the time of their arrival.

"Hearing people tell me it killed 3000 people in Sierra Leone and is now on its way to the Gambia" Masanneh told the group "Heh! Coming to the Gambia! I am very afraid", Ebrima exclaimed raising his eye brows. Younger Kutubo who could only imagine "Ebola" as a dangerous animal which could be hiding in their back yard asked Ebrima why haven't the soldiers gone to Sierra Leone and attack it there before it reach here"?

By

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PHOTOS

At ABDOU'S Saloon Deaf people come from far and near to enjoy the company of each other. Happy young deaf ladies could be seen in the photo volunteering to cook for the others at the front of the Saloon. Others are happy brewing "ataya"







