

SOKE SOLLY SAID - KARATE BEYOND THE ART OF FIGHTING

(Soke means “Grand Master/Professor” – a title only given to a select few Martial Artists in the world.)

Soke Solly Said’s philosophy: “How the power derived from the true constant practice of Karate-do can be used to empower others.”

Soke Suliman “Solly” Said grew up in the shadow of John Vorster Square in Chinatown, Malay Camp and Johannesburg. When he was 12 years old, he was deeply inspired by the traveling religious teacher, the late esteemed Moulana Professor Ansari, who was visiting Johannesburg from India. During his visit to South Africa, he presented public lectures, and in these talks, he emphasized educating and mobilizing the youth to play a meaningful role in society.



This led to, amongst other initiatives, the formation in 1965 of a youth organization, namely the Central Islamic Youth Organization (CIYO), which was led by eminent persons such as Mr MS Laher (Philanthropist) and Mr Abdullah Deedat (Islamic scholar and teacher). The CIYO was a community-based, non-sectarian and non-racial organization. The founding statement of the organisation was, “Let’s get our children involved in positive action.”

One such activity of the youth was karate, which in the 1960s, as part of the Martial Arts was banned in Apartheid South Africa for people of colour. Solly Said was one

of band of a few deeply devoted students who trained clandestinely for several years under the CIYO banner. Two years later, the Karate chapter of the CIYO remained the only surviving committee of the youth formation. It later adopted the name Oyama-do Karate Kai, which was an active member of the non-racial, anti-apartheid South African Council on Sports (SACOS). It was from these humble beginnings that Soke Solly Said went on to become a world-renowned Karate Master.



A bit of history

In 1973, Solly Said at the age of 20 left home to study Karate full time abroad, traveling at first to the USA to train under two famous Japanese Karate Masters, Nakamura and Shigeru Oyama. After earning his Black Belt, he continued his journey to Japan, where he trained under the legendary Karate Master, Sosai Mas Oyama.

During his training in Japan, he received his 2nd Dan (Degree) and was appointed Branch Chief of the then Transvaal province for the Kyokushinkai Karate Organization. He returned to South Africa in 1975, and founded his full-time Gym and Karate School called Seido. From 1975 to date, Soke Solly Said has been travelling locally and abroad, studying, teaching and conducting workshops in many countries on all continents.

Over the years Soke Said has worked with several women's groups and NGOs, including POWA. He taught free six week-long self-defence workshops for abused women and children, twice a year, during Women's month and National Women's

Day. Solly Said's Karate organization has hosted from the mid-1980s until 2004, "International Benefit Tournaments", percentages of which were donated to the Twilight Children's Project in Hillbrow in the late 1980s.

Soke Solly Said was recognized as one of the major donors of the Twilight Children's Project. Between 2003 and 2009, each week, Soke taught Karate to 800 children at the Goud Park Primary School in Eldorado Park. The school program was filmed by the International Network CNN Africa and was broadcast worldwide. According to the Principal, Mrs Olga da Silva, the benefit the kids gained from Soke Solly's Mentorship of Karate-do was something uniquely special and positively life-improving. Unfortunately, this special project came to an end because of a lack of resources to sustain it. Despite modest efforts, including donations from the 2004 International Benefit & Memorial Tournament, it was unable to rescue the school training programme. The tournament also gave generously to other organisations in need.

University of the empty hand

Soke has also run many successful Uchi-Deshi programmes (an Uchi-Deshi is the Japanese term for a fulltime Karate Student - one who does nothing else besides the fulltime study of traditional karate-do taught directly by the Grand Master) for young males, females and several underprivileged youngsters. Soke Solly said has several students from the top echelons of his organization, whom he has been teaching for over 40 years. He is now teaching the grandchildren of his oldest members.

Martial Arts Hall of Fame

In September 2006, Soke Solly Said was invited to Cleveland, Ohio (USA) to be inducted into the World Multi-Martial Arts Hall of Fame and honoured with a Professorship in Sports Medicine, by The World Sports Medicine Hall of Fame. He is the first, and to date, the only African and South African to have achieved this prestigious honour.

Formation of School

During Soke's 51-year journey he has formed his own style, which formed part of a broader health, martial arts and gym complex called Solly Said's Karate, Kickboxing and Gym. The various disciplines on offer include Wellness, Fitness and Rehabilitation, which is facilitated by a fully equipped Gym. Traditional and Sport Karate-do, Kickboxing, Meditation and Yoga programmes are taught in a traditional Dojo ambience.

Since its early beginnings in 1965, Soke Said's karate and gym is community based and is committed to the values of rebuilding community, social cohesion and

solidarity. Soke also believes that training is essential to building a full human being, with a healthy mind and a sound body. He continues to work tirelessly to raise the bar in his training and teaching of karatekas.

Soke Solly Said is a source of constant inspiration to all he encounters on a daily basis. He is a rare breed of person – a Mentor, a Wellness, Health and Life Coach, a faithful practitioner, and Master of Karate-do. The basis of his teaching is Mindful Living. The inspiration and work which began in 1965 by Soke Solly Said continues unabated to this day.

Soke Solly Said has re-established his training programme at the Lenasia Cricket Stadium. Interested persons can contact him on 083 314 9941.