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54710 - זוריס חיפאוו - jaffa stories and coffe					

GRAPEVINE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN



DORIS HIFFAWI with Rwandan Ambassador Joseph Rutabana, overlooking the Jaffa beach. (Courtesy)

■ AMBASSADORS HOSTING national day events are seldom aware of the identities of all of their guests. Many of the invitees are people whom the

host has never met before. This was the case with Rwandan Ambassador **Joseph Rutabana** at the reception that he hosted recently in honor of Rwanda's Independence Day.

Among the guests was well-known Jaffa storyteller **Doris Hiffawi**, a Christian Arab who lives in the legendary Ajami neighborhood in Jaffa. When the feature film *Ajami*, an Israeli-Palestinian cooperative venture, was released 10 years ago, Hiffawi was inspired by the weaving of different stories within the film, and as she knows so many stories herself, having grown up with Christians, Muslims and Jews, she decided to share them with both locals and visitors from abroad. She speaks Arabic, Hebrew and English with equal fluency. The hour-long storytelling sessions are held in her own home, where she serves local culinary delights. Her guests are always fascinated by her stories, which are designed to give them a broader perspective of Israel as a pluralistic society in religious, cultural and ethnic terms.

At the ambassador's party, Hiffawi introduced herself to him and to his wife, **Aline Bizimana**, who is the current president of the International Women's Club of Israel, and invited them to visit her in Jaffa.

Rutabana took her up on the invitation, went on a tour of Jaffa with her that included the famous Anton Coffee shop, where for more than 60 years members of her family have been roasting their own coffee beans and blending their own coffee. Hiffawi's family has been living in Jaffa for more than 100 years. Rutabana got some more coffee plus baklava at Hiffawi's home, where she regaled him with stories about Jaffa.