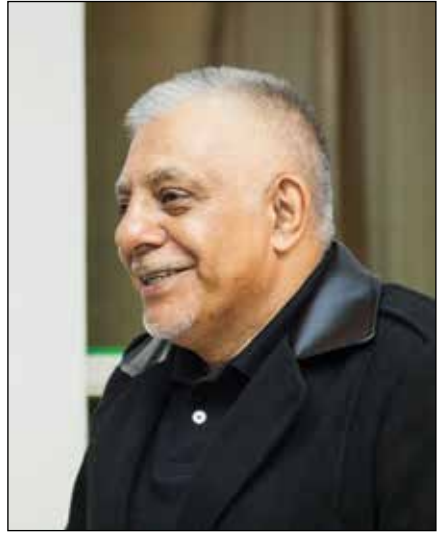


## *Omar Latiff (d. 2015)*

**O**MAR Latiff, who died in September 2015 at the age of 62, made a significant and historic contribution, both professionally and politically, to Pietermaritzburg and our nation. He lectured in accounting and taxation at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. His financial acumen, intellectual ability and leadership qualities were invaluable as the city entered the transition to democratic local government.

He first came to the fore in the 1988 rates boycott by the residents of the city's northern areas, and then served as a co-chairperson of the pioneering Greater Pietermaritzburg Local Government Negotiating Forum, followed in 1995 as the co-chairperson of the Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi Transitional Local Council's Finance Committee. In 1996, he became the city's first black mayor, where he introduced zero-based budgeting, insisted on the unification of the city's divided business organisations, and established a partnership with the city of Hampton, Virginia. The highlight of his mayoral term was the conferring of the Freedom of the City upon President Nelson Mandela and, posthumously, upon Mahatma Gandhi.

Although ill health obliged him to retire from municipal government, Latiff



remained active by chairing the Umgeni Water Board and serving as a director of the Development Bank of Southern Africa and of Price Waterhouse Cooper. Shortly before his death he was appointed to the South African Social Security Agency and the South African National Space Agency. Omar was a devoted family man, and his wife Roshan and four children, as well as the city he served with such distinction, are immeasurably poorer for his passing.

ROBERT HASWELL