



Racism in the USA?

Why, I never heard of such a thing...

by *Alma Calle*

Sheik Mohamed Abdirahman Kariye is one of many black Muslims who are being targeted by the resurgence in nationalized racism commonly referred to as the War on Terror. Kariye, a Portland resident originally from Somaliland, is a well-known international spiritual leader who travels and lectures extensively.

Last September, Kariye was arrested at the Portland Airport by the Portland Joint Terrorism Task Force amidst huge headlines of purported TNT traces found in his luggage. The newspapers in the days following the arrest were filled with accusations and innuendos of Kariye's involvement with global terrorism, and yet the only legal charges against him were Social Security fraud and possessing a government document.

Ten days later, a small article appeared in the back pages of these same newspapers (if it appeared at all) that quietly announced the FBI had failed to detect any traces of TNT in Kariye's luggage. Indeed, the final charge against Kariye is one count of Social Security fraud, to which he pleads not guilty.

The impact of this kind of media bias is quite predictable. The stories and rumors initially written by a handful of unethical and racist reporters and editors (for example, Jim Redden of the Portland Tribune) get endlessly recycled through the various newspaper, television and radio outlets until the public begins to believe that Kariye really is guilty until proven innocent.

And it does not stop there. For example, Seattle community activist James Ujaama was arrested this summer for allegedly conspiring to set up terrorist training camps in Oregon. In reporting the case, the mainstream

media ignored Ujaama's long list of awards for years of community service dedicated to youth entrepreneurship and philanthropy, and instead focused on his alleged intent to commit "violent jihad." In the pretrial court hearing, the judge denied Ujaama bail based on "secret evidence" that Ujaama's own lawyer was not able to view. (Check out www.thestranger.com for more details.)

Meanwhile, the Muslim immigrant population in the US lives in constant fear of being arrested and/or deported for minor infractions of the law or mere accusations of being a terrorist. Stories circulate about people who go to work and never return, only to call

from halfway around the world after being deported. The US government is now demanding that nationals from 18 countries need to report to the INS to subject themselves to fingerprints, mugshots, and interviews that detail names and addresses of their relatives, friends, and associates within the US.

The groundwork is being set for massive roundups of people to be either deported, arrested or detained based on their nationality, religion, and race. Indeed, this process is already underway and precedes the predictable fascist state that history abhors.

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Fire Chief Kroeker!



Members of the Latino community and community-based organizations held a press conference at city hall on Tuesday, November 26, 2002, to call for the resignation/firing of Portland Police Chief Kroeker. This action was in response to the recent awarding of medals to the two police officers who shot and killed Jose Santos Mejia Poot on April 1, 2001. Call Mayor Katz at (503)823-4120 and send an email to mayorkatz@ci.portland.or.us to support the call for Kroeker's resignation/firing.

Taft Hotel to close

Another rip in the social safety net

by j. poselenzny

Have you ever looked at the moon and wondered what the fuck you're doing here, pressing on into the wind, trying desperately to ignore the helicopters above, alone? When you realize how many different things are going on at once, you start to feel small. Cars weaving through the city from one place to the next, each containing a completely different life. The world is filled with stories of people hurrying back and forth, never stopping to realize where they are.

On the corner of SW 13th and Washington, a woman sitting on a bench asks me for a cigarette. As we talk, I learn that her name is Karen Fischer. And on the corner where we sit stands the Taft Hotel, Karen's home. She tells me the beautiful story of her wedding, how she likes to sit and play organ in the church down the road. She shows me her ring and her watch, proudly telling me of the longshoreman she plans to move in with on April 3rd, the date that the Taft Hotel, home to seventy people, ceases to exist. Seventy stories take a sudden and crucial turn.

In Jan. 2002, Mt. Hood Community Mental Health and Network Behavioral Health Care merged, forming the non-profit Cascadia Behavioral Health Care. In July they acquired Unity, another struggling organization, along with the Taft Hotel. According to Cascadia's Mark Schorr, the Hotel has lost about \$1 million over the past three years, effectively running it into the ground. It is reimbursed at \$50 per person for its residents, who are referred there by various organizations, including Senior and Disabled Services and Veterans Af-

fairs. This \$50 is expected to cover not only the cost of living, but the cost of having a 24 hour support staff. Most of the funding comes from the state, and a small portion comes from Social Security and other sources.

According to Schorr, the Hotel is going to close this spring due to cuts in government funding. The economic cost now becomes a societal one. Although several of the residents have lived there for many years, some almost a decade, half of them are considered temporary. For those who aren't, Karen says that the staff is doing a very good job of helping people find new homes. No one knew the exact numbers of how many had actually found homes and how many had not.

So what happens now? This is the question that keeps going through my head as the night wears on and the moon rises higher into the sky. How can somebody put a value on life, a bottom line, tear up the final pages, and throw them out on the street? I have yet to find an answer.

Racism,

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There is a way out of the mess, but only if the American public stands up for the ideals it claims to uphold; for instance, the right to a fair trial (this includes equal access to evidence), access to a lawyer (this includes client/lawyer confidentiality), and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

No excuses. Find your voice. It is desperately needed

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