

POLICE ATTACK ON RESPECTED ELDER HIGHLIGHTS ESCALATING POLICE TERRORISM AGAINST BLACK COMMUNITY

<http://umojafestpeacecenter.ning.com/forum/topics/police-attack-on-respected>

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June 23rd, Seattle's Central District. Three old friends were were standing on private property on the corner of 23rd and E. Union, enjoying the early afternoon sun.

These friends had lived in the neighborhood all of their lives. They could remember plays from high school football games that happened decades ago. They could remember which businesses had come and gone from neighborhood corners throughout half a century. They could remember the U.S. war on Vietnam, LBJ's "Great Society" program, and "Urban Renewal". They could remember desegregation, the great white flight to the suburbs, red lining, and the historic allocation of public resources away from the inner city populations. They could remember the sudden and massive arrival of government-imported narcotics in their community (as detailed in *Dark Alliance*, *The CIA*, *The Contras*, and *the Crack Cocaine Explosion* by Gary Webb, foreword by Congressional Black Caucus member Maxine Waters, Seven Stories Press 1999, <http://www.sevenstories.com/book/?GCOI=58322100705890>). They could remember when white suburbanites first started to take an interest in re-settling the inner city, as they became aware of the energy crisis and the true cost of commuting. They had watched the banks, mortgage companies, police, and city government shift from policies of benign neglect to policies designed to actively remove the Black population from the "CD", in order to attract white investors. They had watched Black homeowners and businesses alike succumb to the pressure to give up their land in Seattle as the happy yuppie settlers moved in.

But these men had no intention of leaving. This was their neighborhood. These were the streets and corners that the movie reels in their minds had been recording throughout their lives. And today, like many other days, they were standing in front of the local convenience store, discussing the flow of life through their town.

Their peace was not to be. The patrol car veered into the parking lot and heaved to a stop in front of the three Black men as if summoned by a magnet. The two white cops, one male and one female, stepped out and commanded the men to submit to their authority. It did not seem to occur to these cops that they were interrupting a conversation that had been going on since long before they were born.

"We were traveling NB on 23rd Av when we noticed three black males sitting in front of the gas station on the NW corner of 23rd Av / E Union," said the first sentence of the police report.

The female cop approached a nearby concrete planter in front of the store, and poured an unidentified liquid out of a can in a brown paper bag. Her police report stated that all three of the friends had been drinking beer, although the man she went on to arrest has never imbibed alcohol in his life.

"You're not involved in this, you can leave," the female cop said to the most well dressed and most obviously sober of the three friends. This man was Omari Tahir, 62 year resident of the CD, thirty year Little League baseball coach, Vietnam era veteran, former Franklin High School educator, and lifelong community organizer. Omari did not leave. He stood calm and dignified, leaning against another planter, watching the events of his neighborhood as he has always done.

The young white woman in uniform was dismayed. She had expected the old Black man to be fearful, to be grateful that she had given him permission to depart, and to scurry away like the animal she considered him to be. His failure to grovel or to run enraged her.

"Oh, you want some of this?", she said, "Take your hands out of your pockets!"

The depth of this man's life experience never occurred to her. She could not imagine this man traveling through Vietnam, Ghana and England. She could not imagine that he had organized boycotts against apartheid South Africa, at a time when that government was being directly supported by the Safeway corporation and the Liquor Control Board monopoly of Washington State. It did not occur to her that he had been one of the founders of the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center in 1985, and that he had been there when that museum was raided by Mayor Schell's SWAT team in 1999, the year of the WTO. She did not know that he was one of the organizers of the annual Umojafest African Heritage Festival and Parade, and a founding member of the Umojafest Peace Center, located less than a block from where she was standing. None of this would have been meaningful to her if she had known it. She was not of this community, and she had been trained to hate and fear it. Her job was to occupy these streets with arms until the end of her shift, and then go far away from them to rest.

Omari remained calm and and quiet, hands in his pockets, patiently observing his neighborhood. She angrily and forcefully grabbed him by the wrist.

"The suspect", she wrote in her police report "was also staring at us with a 'thousand yard stare' which through my training is a pre-attack indicator." ... "The (other) two males were cooperative. Ofc. Whitlatch and I approached the suspect and asked him to remove his hands from his pockets, he said nothing. I asked him again to remove his hands from his pockets. The suspect did not respond. I took hold of his right wrist..."

Her decision to initiate physical contact with the old man caused the male cop to experience a sudden surge of testosterone. He rushed to seize Omari violently by both arms and started kicking Omari's feet apart while yelling "Get down on the hood of the car!".

Omari remained calm. "If I've committed a crime, you arrest me, put me in the back of the car, and take me downtown before a judge," he said.

They handcuffed Omari, placed a cloth hood over his head, took him to the East Precinct, charged him with "Harassment", "Obstructing", and "Unlawful Use Of A Weapon", and transported him to the King County Jail where he spent that night and most of the next day.

"I found a "P-38" fixed blade knife attached to a set of keys in his right front pocket where his hands had been," the police report continued. "A P-38 has a 1/2 inch re-curve blade designed to cut metal. P-38's are commonly used in fights."

Outside of the fantasy world of white police action films, with their hoards of dangerous dark skinned monsters, a "P-38" is more commonly known as a pocket can opener, such as an old man might carry to open a tuna fish lunch if he was on his way downtown for a day of legal research.

At nearly 2 PM of the following day, Omari was arraigned in Seattle Municipal Courtroom number 2 before Judge Esonya Charles. At the time he entered the courtroom, Omari still had not been told what he was charged with. Before the judge had finished reading him the charges, the prosecutor made a last minute decision to withdraw two of them, leaving the possession of the can opener as the only standing charge against him. Omari asserted his right to represent himself in his own defense, which he has done several times successfully in the past. In retaliation for his calm assertiveness, the judge prevented Omari from being shown a copy of the police report for as long as she felt she could legally do so. Only after subjecting Omari to 20 minutes of questions about his mental competence did she finally allow him to see the report.

Omari calmly explained to the judge that the "weapon" in the report was a can opener, and asked her if she wanted to find probable cause. Most judges would have dismissed the case at this point. However, Judge Charles is one of King County's very few female African American judges, and she is very sensitive to the fact that she will receive fierce attacks from her colleagues on the bench if she makes any ruling that they consider to be the slightest act of solidarity with Seattle's Black community. She found probable cause, and asked Omari for a plea.

Omari remained calm. "Your honor, I plead prisoner of war status," he said, "I am an African prisoner of war, brought over here on a slave ship, and I was captured again yesterday by the slave patrol on my way to the law library."

"Fast forward it to 2009 please", said judge Charles, not thinking about the picture of the slave owner George Washington that was hanging on the wall behind her.

"That's where we are, 2009", explained Omari, "and the Indians are still on reservations and the slave owners' constitution is still in place". Omari went on to explain the nature of capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy and neocolonialism to both the court and the significant crowd of his supporters in the audience, who had organized a three-hour-long rally for him that morning outside of the jail.

The judge entered a plea of "Not Guilty" on Omari's behalf and scheduled the next day of his trial for July 27th.

The judge and prosecutor then tried to find a justification to demand bail from Omari or keep him in jail.

"I never miss a court date," Omari pointed out, "I love appearing before the white supremacist court!"

The judge questioned the permanence of Omari's mailing address, only to be informed that he has had the same post office box since 1977. Then she asked Omari whether he currently has a job.

"I'm disabled", Omari patiently explained, "I'm a permanently disabled Vietnam era Black veteran, and I suffer from Post Traumatic Slavery Syndrome."

The court ordered Omari released on his own recognizance, and hurriedly expedited him out of the courtroom.

He was released several hours later, but his wallet was returned to him in a plastic bag with all of its contents taken out, and \$200 missing from it. His can opener is still being held as evidence against him. Omari is calmly charging the police officers with armed robbery for the theft of his money and can opener.

This assault, false arrest, and armed robbery of Omari Tahir by the Seattle Police Department is only the latest example of the escalating war of police terrorism that is intended to remove the last of the Afrikan population from the center of Seattle. The resources that are being used to train and pay police to harass, profile, intimidate, arrest, rob, and abuse Black civilians could be used for positive education and cultural reconstruction that would actually reduce real crime. It is a clear example of how targeting Black people does not reduce crime.

There is, in fact, a tremendous crisis of crime, drug addiction, family disintegration, and youth violence plaguing the Central District, none of which is being addressed by the city government. Instead of repairing the damage done to our population by the decades of benign neglect that followed the decades of Jim Crow, lynching, and slavery, the current mayor and city council would rather pretend that these problems are somehow antiquated and not worthy of discussion. They would rather hire more police and train them to ethnically cleanse Seattle of its Black population, while blaming that population for all the social problems created by the people who are in power.

Some white people may believe that they will benefit from these policies, but history shows that this is unlikely for several reasons.

First of all, these types of police policies have often led to scenarios like the riots in LA that followed the infamous acquittal of the white police officers who beat Rodney King on live video. Such scenarios create an unsafe environment for everyone, regardless of skin color.

More importantly, however, repressive government policies that are initiated against one ethnic group never stop with the victimization of just that group. When police become accustomed to treating one part of the civilian population with this level of contempt, they soon begin to show that contempt to every civilian in society.

Perhaps the most often cited observer of this phenomenon is the German Protestant clergyman Martin Niemoller who is reputed to have said "Als die Nazis die Kommunisten holten, habe ich geschwiegen; ich war ja kein Kommunistwrites" ("First they came for the communists, and I remained silent because I was not a communist"). He

went on to explain how the Nazis then they came for the socialists, the trade unionists, the Jews and eventually for himself, by which time there was no one left to speak out.

We call upon all of the press, elected officials, clergymen, and citizens of Seattle, King County, and the world to speak out and put a stop to this process of ethnic cleansing while you still have the chance to do so.

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UPDATE:

When Omari went to the pre-trial hearing on July 27th, his standby council did not show up in court. He appeared before a new judge who questioned Omari's right to represent himself in court, and was angry that a Black man would exercise such a legal right.

The judge accused Omari of being in contempt of court and sentenced him to two days in jail without bail or visitors. While in jail, Omari was assaulted by King County jail guards who punched him in the jaw with force that made him bleed, pushed his head against a concrete floor, kneed him in the back, twisted all four of his limbs, and delivered blows to his rib cage.[See photo.]

They then stripped him of his clothing and left him lying face down on a concrete floor for six hours. He was refused medical attention while in jail. After he was released, late in the evening of July 29th he checked himself into Swedish Hospital for treatment of his jaw wound.

The Umojafest community is now discussing how to respond to this increasingly brutal series of ongoing attacks against 62 year old Brother Omari Tahir.