

Excerpt: ‘Nomad Diaries’ By Yasmeen Maxamuud

December 23, 2003. Salaamu Calaykum Hawo: I love this country. I love the opportunities and the safety it has given my family. I love knowing that my kids have had great opportunities here. I love the American people, who are kind, generous, and sometimes annoyingly naïve. I love how they are proud to announce they have never left this city, not knowing they admit to their own ignorance. I love the way they take interest in you, sometimes asking infuriating questions, once again showing their limited understanding of the outside world. I don't necessarily love how they love their Americanism, and definitely not when they think America is the greatest country in the world, but then again I guess everyone accept as true that their country is the greatest in the world.

I am amazed how narrow-minded and uninformed they can be, thinking Africa is one country and that all Muslim people are terrorists. It's due to this simplicity and insensitiveness that Americans sometimes harass you; in the name of their country they will even harm you. I was in the airport on my way to attend our Cousin Oontire Raage's funeral a week ago. The illness came to him unexpectedly, and he was taken away quickly. Haybe had gotten me a ticket to fly the day before his funeral. Everything had to move fast so I could make it to his funeral in Columbus on time. Haybe dropped me off at the airport and I

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proceeded to the security checkpoint. The lady at the security check, a skinny, sad-looking woman who looked mishandled by life, gazed at me harshly. I knew I was in trouble when she said, boorishly, “step over here ma’am.” I obliged, stepping to the area she had assigned me. “Ma’am are you going to take that thing off?” she asked, the thing being my hijab. “No,” I replied. “Well then I have to search your hair, ma’am,” she said, pointing to my headscarf. “You need to take that thing off so I can search your head.” I refused to let her search my head, let alone take off my hijab. I asked her, albeit rudely, to inspect the head of the blond woman next to me first, that I would not allow anyone to meddle with me if other women were not put through the same thing I was going through. She was offended: “I don’t think you should tell me how to do my job ma’am,” she snapped, it seemed as if all the blood in her body collected on her face making her look like an overripe tomato, she was so angry.

My plane was leaving in half an hour and I knew I would miss it if she started this nonsensical hunt of hers. I refused to be searched. When I asked her if she were searching for weapons under my hijab, she acted shocked as if I overstepped my boundary; her lips twitched with fury. Grunting, she began patting me down, aggressively shoving my body parts and backside. What could I possibly be carrying in my back? She attempted to take my hijab off, and that is when I pushed her away. Suddenly I was surrounded by four massive angry men, who handcuffed me and dragged me to a hidden office inside the airport. I was

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hysterical; I tried to tell them that my plane was leaving and I was going to miss my cousin Oontire's funeral that he passed away suddenly. I became incoherent; scared by the large white men who took turns to scream at me. They pounded on the table, invading my space with their foul alcohol stench by getting close to my face. They continued to snatch off my hijab. They were hostile and I could tell they meant business. There was not a hint of humanity in their eyes, not an ounce of compassion for my predicament.

I became afraid for my life, wondering if my end was concealed in their huge, hammering hands. They did not care that I was late for a funeral; all they wanted to do was to harass and violate me by taking my hijab off. Here I was surrounded by four muscular men who could do whatever they wanted to: they could kill me and no one would ever know. I perspired all over my body. My heart raced, my body trembled with fear, and painful tears stormed from my eyes. I simply felt helpless. I didn't care if they kicked me out of their country: I would never allow an ignorant man at some airport to violate my religious rights by forcing me to take off my hijab. By the time Haybe arrived to take me home, I could see the resentment that emanated from their faces for not succeeding to take off my hijab. The entire ordeal made me wonder, if they were not more interested to see what was under my hijab than to safeguard against a harm I could commit. The obsession with Muslims here is infuriating: everyone feels they have the right to

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pester you simply because you are a Muslim. Dear Sister, if I dislike one thing about being in America, it's the constant scrutiny of Muslims.

Please visit Nomad Diaries @: www.nomaddiaries.com

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