

and superintendent sitting up front, near the stage of the auditorium, a few of us (parents) were asked to move closer to the front. After everyone was seated, Muslim women walked in and sat in the middle section toward the back. Were we the shield for the administration?

During the start of the meeting, one person stood up to ask for a public apology from the Somali Muslims who sent the boy to the hospital with the head injury and injured the two others who tried to help him. “We want a public apology,” asserted the parent. The place went silent. There was a long pause, glaring looks, and then the meeting oddly ended.

Days later it was discovered that this clan of Somalis didn’t know what an apology or saying they’re sorry meant. “What is this apology? It’s not part of our language or religion,” stated a Muslim woman during a local TV broadcast of a diversity network meeting.

After that incident, students were told not to discuss the issue, not even with their parents. Fear is still heavily present throughout the community. ■

**Minnesota has the largest concentration of Somali immigrants in North America, which is home to an estimated one-third of the total Somali population in the U.S.**

• **In a 25-year period up till 2011, 84,000 Somali refugees emigrated to the U.S. About 40 percent of them live in the State of Minnesota.**

• **Minneapolis is home to more Somalis than any other city in the U.S.**

• **Number of Somali malls in the Twin Cities: 3**

• **Foreign-born share of Minnesota’s population:**

**1990 — 2.6 percent;**

**2000 — 5.3 percent;**

**2011 — 7.3 percent**

## Another Firsthand Account from Minnesota

By **MARIE JOHNSON**

I am a teacher. One of the easiest adult English classes I ever taught was to a group of Somali Muslim refugees. But it was only later that I found out what made it was so easy. The reason was that the students already spoke English, but they needed to attend my class in order to get paid government assistance. They just didn’t want me to know because they would have had to go to work all day instead of attend a fun three-hour class.

Even if they were sick, they still had to attend, so sometimes they came with flu and colds. Perhaps because of this exposure, I became sick myself during the Christmas break. Once it was discovered that someone in the class had tuberculosis. All the teachers were at risk and were advised to take a series of shots—which may or may not have offered protection.

I got to know some of our local refugees and their

customs when I coached soccer for teenagers of all races. During one of the warm-ups, one of the Somalis wasn’t following the rules. I was there to witness the infraction and assigned running laps as a consequence for this individual. The next day a Somali adult arrived on the soccer field and stared at us. He came to question the discipline, but would not speak to me, a female. Rules for everyone else evidently don’t apply to these Muslims.

Then there is the cost of the refugee program to U.S. taxpayers. One example is a Somali owner of a child care center, which received public assistance. The center offered jobs, not legitimate jobs, to women who would then bring their children to the center. Only two percent of these employees actually worked. Many would go grocery shopping while their children were at the center receiving government-subsidized child care.

In addition, the center also received government food assistance for meals catered in by a Muslim restaurant owner who, previously, was prosecuted for lying to a federal grand jury for recruiting terrorists. Perhaps these refugees figure, why integrate into society when the handouts keep coming? ■

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*Marie Johnson is the author’s pen name. She too is concerned about the consequences, in a diverse community, of speaking the truth as she sees it.*