

Meet the Muslims next door

BY JENNIFER JONES
Special to the Times

THERE was an interesting program on CNN recently, "Unwelcome, The Muslims Next Door," inspired by Republican U.S. Rep. Peter King's recent hearing on the "radicalization of the American Muslim community."

As an American Muslim woman, I tuned in, keen to know what my country, neighbors and other shoppers at the Redmond Safeway, where I usually shop, think of us. I was left wondering if it ever occurs to others that we are sometimes afraid, sad — and yes, even a little angry — just like everybody else.

Speaking of Safeway, I've been busy buying extra dinner supplies for another family in our club of "possibly ... allegedly ... I'm just sayin'," radicalized American Muslims. My nephew, Izz, was diagnosed with leukemia two weeks ago at Seattle Children's hospital, and his mom and dad are understandably too grief-stricken to think about cooking right now.

But that's a great, I suppose, godsend of circumstances. After all, worrying about the survival of your little one, radicalization has to be put on hold. At least their Kirkland neighbors can sigh a little breath of relief.

Scallions are on my shopping list, a key ingredient in the yummy cream-cheese wontons Izz likes. It's a challenge to get a kid on chemo to eat, so we've tried everything.

It's funny, though, when I should be thinking about Izz, I can't set foot in the produce aisle without remembering a shopper I ran into years ago. He was 50-ish, tall, and sported a red bandanna around his neck (I swear, you can't make this stuff up). He paused by the apples and called us a "bunch of sand-niggers."

It wasn't the first time I heard something like that, but it was the first time someone included my kids in a jab. "A bunch," plural. Karim, my jelly-doughnut-smearer toddler, Amani, long-haired and smiling, dried glitter glue on her hands, and oldest son, frozen mid-lament over the cruelty of being forced to leave the house, and his Xbox, to go shopping with mom.

The memory pushed aside — though it pops up every time I step into the Redmond



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community" have asked for the recipe. It's a great dish for potlucks, the kind of gathering we favor for our radicalization meetings. No reason one can't nosh and fine tune The Great Plan to Smash America (working title), right?

My best friend, Kay, loves them too. She has even shared the recipe with her Muslim friends back in Louisiana, where they carry them to their mosques. Sure, they were hit hard by Katrina, struggling in the wake of a bashed economy and still-unfinished homes, but damn it, radicalization must go on, from sea to shining sea.

Come to think of it, I'll buy extra wonton supplies for the upcoming grand opening of Redmond's new Mosque. I can freeze them, and with only one car (the economy hit us radicals, too, even in the land of Microsoft) it's a pain to schlepp to the store.

tons will be my small contribution to the effort.

Just ask New York congressman King. We are a united, singularly minded group. We aren't individuals and families with struggles, tragedies, sticky-faced toddlers, economic worries and mundane, shopping-list concerns like the rest of America. We are the scary *Muslims next door*.

If you're brave, neighbor, come on over and ring the bell. I'll take a break from my radicalization schedule to share some tea, and maybe the best wonton recipe on Earth. I know it's not true to form, but I'm just nice like that.



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