



LEWISTON: Trump supporter Stephanie Rodrigue, 17, picks up one of the campaign signs she's collected in her room. — AP photos



LEWISTON: Abdiaziz Shaleh, right, a Lewiston high school senior and co-captain of the soccer team, and Essa Gedi, center, both whose families emigrated from Somalia, sit with classmate Isiah Leach, left, during lunch in the school's cafeteria.

HOW A COMMUNITY REJUVENATED BY REFUGEES CAME TO EMBRACE TRUMP

A DIFFERENT TAKE ON PRESIDENT'S MORE 'CONTROVERSIAL' POLICIES

LEWISTON, Maine: Richard Rodrigue stood in the back of a banquet hall, watching his blond-haired, blue-eyed daughter mingle among her high school classmates. These teenagers speak dozens of languages, and hail from a dozen African nations. They fled brutal civil war, famine, oppressive regimes to find themselves here, at a pre-prom fete in this once-dying New England mill town, revived by an influx of some 7,500 immigrants over the last 16 years. Rodrigue smiled and waved at his daughter, proud she is a part of it. "It will help her in life," he said. "The world is not all white."

Rodrigue believes the refugees resuscitated his town - plugging the population drain that had threatened to cripple it, opening shops and restaurants in boarded-up storefronts. But he also agrees with Donald Trump that there should be no more of them, at least not now. His working-class community, built along the banks of the Androscoggin River in the whitest state in America, is a place that some point to as proof that refugee integration can work. And yet for the first time in 30 years, voters in Androscoggin County chose a Republican for president, endorsing Trump's nativist zeal against the very sort of immigrants who share their streets and their schools.

The mills that line the river sit mostly shuttered today, and a quarter of children grow up poor in the county of 107,000. So Trump's supporters here tie their embrace of his immigration clampdown to their economic anxieties. "There's got to be a point in time when you have to say, 'Whoa, let's get the working people back up. Let's bring the money in.' But they keep coming, keep coming," Rodrigue said. "I guess it just boils

down to: What's enough?" No one invited the Somali refugees to Lewiston. They fled bullets and warlords to eventually be chosen for resettlement in big American cities.

'We wanted to be safe'

In early 2001, a few refugee families struggling to afford housing in Portland ventured 30 miles north and found a city in retreat. Empty downtown stores were ringed by sagging apartment buildings. The refugees saw possibility in Lewiston's decay. Friends and families followed. The town morphed in a matter of months into a laboratory for what happens when culture suddenly shifts. Maine's population is 94 percent white, and its citizens were abruptly confronted with hundreds of black Muslims, barely able to speak English. Ardo Mohamed fled Mogadishu in the 1990s, when militiamen burst into her home and started shooting. She watched her father die, as the rest of the family escaped into the woods. They wound up in refugee camps, separated for years, then finally Atlanta, then Lewiston in 2001.

"We wanted to be safe," said the mother of five, "just like you do." When the refugees began arriving, Tabitha Beauchesne was a student at Lewiston High School. Her new classmates were poor, but Beauchesne was poor, too. It felt to her then, and it still feels to her now, that the refugees got more help than her family. "They just seemed to take over," she said.

Beauchesne doesn't consider herself racist, though acknowledges that race and religion likely played a role in her sense that the refugees overwhelmed her community. She's now a stay-at-home mother of two, and she left Lewiston to

move to another school district in the county because she believes immigrant students monopolize teachers' attention. Once a Barack Obama supporter, Beauchesne turned to Trump - and she cheers his efforts to curb the flow of refugees into the US. She wants Trump to design a tax system that funnels less of her money to aiding those from other countries.

"I just don't like giving money away that's not benefiting me and, not to sound selfish, but then seeing it benefit other people," she said. "As a business owner, my husband wouldn't donate \$500 to the Salvation Army if we couldn't afford

it. Our country needs to do the same thing." Taxpayers do help some of the immigrants, whose population exploded as Somali refugees gave way to those seeking asylum, from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, a dozen nations in all. Still, many of the newcomers work, said Catherine Besteman, a professor of anthropology at Maine's Colby College.

Maine's immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa made \$136.6 million in income in 2014, and paid \$40 million in taxes, according to one report from a bipartisan think tank. But Besteman said they work invisible jobs: they take out trash at

hotels, do the laundry at the hospital. People don't see them working, so it's easy to assume they are living off handouts.

Republican leaders - from the president to the governor to the local GOP - have seized on the resentment that breeds. The county Republican party routinely rails against what it calls "the refugee racket," and complains that the school system is forced to accommodate 34 languages. Lewiston School Superintendent Bill Webster acknowledges that does cost money. But he has a statistic he likes to share with critics.

'Death spiral'

An average of 78.3 percent of immigrant students graduate from his district within five years, compared to an average of 73.3 percent of native-born students. And now some of those immigrant kids are going off to college to get degrees, as teachers, doctors, engineers. Two years ago, immigrant children led the high school soccer team to win the state championship - a moment heralded as a triumph of cultural cooperation. "If the immigrant population hadn't happened," Webster said, "Lewiston would be a community that was contracting, and potentially in a downward death spiral."

Yet many on the outskirts of Lewiston have quietly stewed over the change in their county - and Trump's "America First" message rings especially true with them. Thirty miles up the highway, David Lovewell stood in the parking lot of the paper mill where he used to work, before it shed hundreds of jobs. Now he runs a logging company with his sons just outside the town of Livermore Falls. A few months ago, business got so bad he laid off eight employees. — AP



LEWISTON: A worshipper takes his shoes off before entering the Lewiston Auburn Islamic Center for prayers.



ATLANTA: Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff walks with his girlfriend Alisha Kramer after speaking to his supporters as votes continue to be counted in a race that was too close to call for Georgia's 6th Congressional District in a special election to replace Tom Price, who is now the secretary of Health and Human Services. — AFP

GEORGIA HOUSE HEADING TO HIGH-STAKES RUNOFF

DUNWOODY: A Georgia congressional election is headed to a high-stakes runoff that's shaping up as a referendum on President Donald Trump ahead of crucial midterm elections next year. Democrat Jon Ossoff, a little-known 30-year-old former congressional staffer, fell a few percentage points shy of an outright victory Tuesday amid an 18-candidate scramble in Georgia's 6th Congressional District. His strong showing in the conservative district, driven by eye-popping fundraising numbers from out-of-state donors, underscored Democrats' eagerness to get a win against Trump as they strive to take back House control in 2018.

Republican Karen Handel, a former Georgia secretary of state, finished a distant second in the crowded field, qualifying for the June 20 runoff. Handel treated Trump gingerly throughout the campaign in a district he barely won in November. But the president called to congratulate her Wednesday morning, and Handel said she hoped he would come to campaign for her. "I would hope so," Handel said on CNN. "I mean look, all Republicans, it's all hands on deck for us."

Trump had attacked Ossoff in recent days and took to Twitter again Wednesday morning to crow about the outcome in Georgia following Democrats' failure to win a different special election in Kansas last week.

"Dems failed in Kansas and are now failing in Georgia. Great job Karen Handel! It is now Hollywood vs. Georgia on June 20th," Trump wrote, alluding to celebrity donations that

came in for Ossoff. The close outcomes in conservative Kansas and Georgia underscored Democrats' potential to capitalize on surging liberal energy following Trump's election, but also pointed to the limits of how far they can go in Republican-friendly districts.

Republicans hold a 237-193 majority in the House so Democrats would need to pick up more than 20 seats to retake control in the 2018 midterm, an uphill climb. Another special election is coming up in Montana next month.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez insisted Democrats have the momentum in the Georgia race, and made clear his party will not be shy about tying Handel to Trump. "She's the person who supports Donald Trump's efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. I wonder if Donald Trump and she are going to campaign on that issue in her district," Perez said on CNN. "We have a lot of wind at our back. The progressive energy out there is palpable," he added. The winner in Georgia will succeed Republican Tom Price, who resigned the seat to join Trump's administration as health secretary.

Leaders in both major parties agree the race offers a prime test run for 2018 elections, because the affluent, well-educated Georgia district is replete with the kind of voters Democrats must attract to reclaim a House majority and win more gubernatorial and Senate races. For Democrats, Ossoff's near win encourages the opposition movement that has flourished since Trump's election. — AP

FRESNO SHOOTER WANTED TO KILL WHITE PEOPLE: POLICE

FRESNO: A man wanted in the slaying of a security guard set out to kill as many white people as he could on Tuesday, gunning down three men on the streets of downtown Fresno before he was captured and admitted to the shootings, authorities said. Kori Ali Muhammad, 39, was arrested shortly after the morning rampage that left three white men dead, police said. Muhammad, who is black, fired 16 rounds in less than two minutes at four places within a block, shooting men who appeared to be going about their day, authorities say.

During his arrest, Muhammad shouted "Allahu akbar," but Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said the shootings had "nothing to do with terrorism in spite of the statement he made."

"This is solely based on race," Dyer told reporters. Authorities say Muhammad first walked up to a utility truck and shot a Pacific Gas & Electric Co employee sitting in the passenger seat. The driver of the truck, who is Latino, sped off to the police department for help, but the worker, a 34-year-old white man, died.

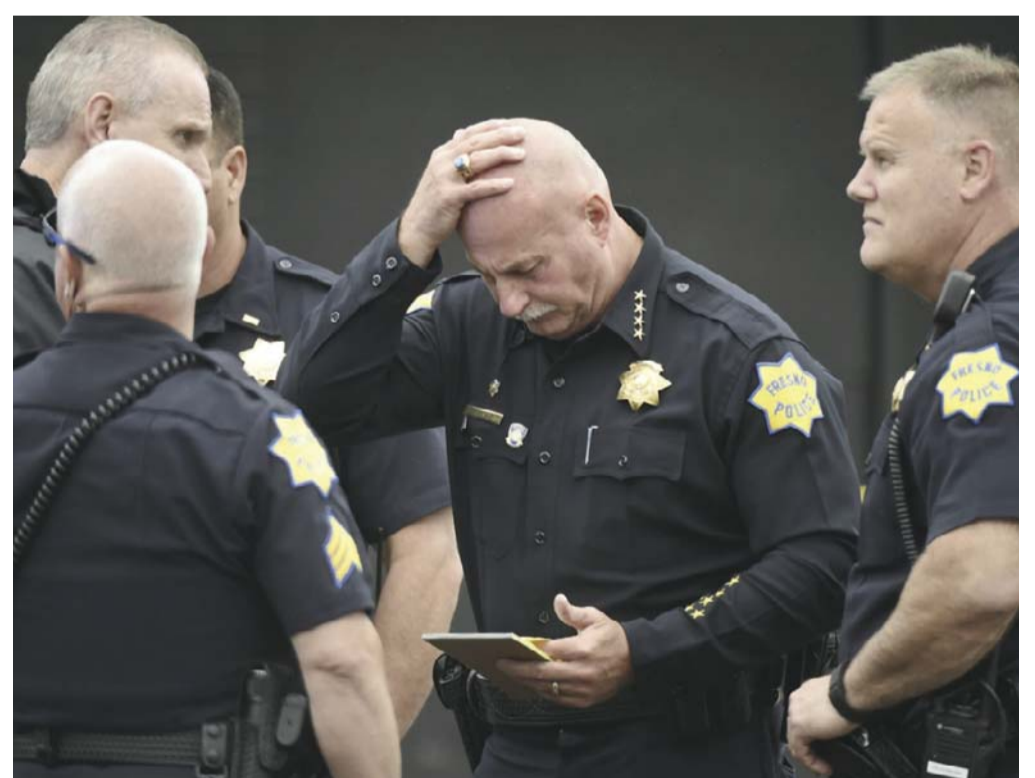
Sparing other races

Muhammad then shot at another person and missed, police said. He aimed at a third, killing the 37-year-old on the sidewalk as he walked with a bag of groceries in a neighborhood lined with tall trees, authorities say. The final victim, 58, was gunned down in the parking lot of a charity building. Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said Muhammad approached a vehicle in between shootings, but he spared the lives of two women who were in the car with a child. The women were Latina, he said.

"These individuals who were chosen today did not do anything to deserve what they got," Dyer said. "These were unprovoked attacks by an individual that was intent on carrying out homicides today. He did that." Police had put out a news release hours before the shootings Tuesday, saying that Muhammad was armed and dangerous and wanted in the shooting death of a security guard at a Motel 6 last week. The guard, 25-year-old Carl Williams, was white. Muhammad told officers at his arrest that he was the guy they were looking for, Dyer said.

"I did it. I shot them," Dyer said Muhammad told officers. Police are searching for the revolver Muhammad said he tossed into a pile of clothing. The gun may have been picked up by someone else, Dyer said. Stephen Hughes, 66, said he and his wife rushed home Tuesday after receiving a frantic call from a neighbor. Hughes came home to see a body draped in a blanket on the sidewalk leading to his front door.

He first thought the shooting was gang-relat-



FRESNO: Fresno Police chief Jerry Dyer reviews notes on the triple fatal shooting before addressing the media. — AP

ed, but then he noticed the bag of groceries near the body. "It looks like a guy carrying his groceries home from the store," Hughes said. On what appeared to be Muhammad's Facebook page, he repeatedly posted "#LetBlackPeopleGo" and encouraged "black warriors" to "mount up." A flurry of posts emerged in the past day.

He wrote that his "kill rate increases tremendously on the other side" and also posted about "white devils." On several occasions, he wrote updates that included the phrase "Allahu Akbar," meaning "God is great" in Arabic. Muhammad has a criminal history that includes arrests on weapons, drugs and false imprisonment charges and making terrorist threats. He had been associated with gangs, but he was not a confirmed member, police say.

Bizarre beliefs

Muhammad was charged in 2005 with possessing cocaine with intent to distribute, court records show. Federal prosecutors said at the time that he was also in possession of a 9mm semi-automatic handgun and two rifles after being convicted of a felony. He claimed insanity, and his attorney requested a psychiatric exami-

nation for his client, saying Muhammad "appeared eccentric with some bizarre beliefs." A psychiatrist who examined Muhammad believed he had psychosis, Muhammad's attorney said in the court filing.

He also "suffered auditory hallucinations and had at least two prior mental health hospitalizations," according to court documents. His attorney said that Muhammad had "paranoia" and thought the justice system and his defense attorney were conspiring against him, court papers said. The attorney who represented Muhammad in that case did not return a call for comment Tuesday.

Public records list Muhammad as Cory Taylor and other aliases with addresses in Fresno and Sacramento. A woman who identified herself as Taylor's grandmother said Tuesday that the family last saw him on Easter Sunday. She hung up the phone before giving her name. Authorities spotted Muhammad running and took him into custody. Police are looking for the revolver. Police say two of the victims may have been clients of Catholic Charities, which provides a variety of services for refugees, the homeless and those with disabilities. — AP