

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NEVADA'S DRUG CZAR

By Linda Porter
Feature Writer

Porter: What is your job, first of all?

Ramadan: Priority is to do a number of things. It includes working with the three major disciplines in terms of the "war against drugs, that is, law enforcement, treatment and education; receiving grants that are submitted to them, getting them and putting them into adequate terms of what seems to be practical ideas in terms of funding - what seems to be most effective for the money that the State gets from the federal government; coming up with innovative programs, where we can utilize monies from all three disciplines in similar programs that will also influence getting the most back for the buck; administering or providing administrative support for the Governor's Drug Commission; giving input to community organization task forces and substance abuse councils in terms of direction of our drug traffic; going in and getting input from them for the Commission; and watching the development of drug trafficking.

Porter: So, out of all those programs that you have just named, what have you accomplished thus far, since becoming drug czar?

Ramadan: Well, we've been instrumental in terms of development of law enforcement's package that was submitted for the Bureau of Justice Assistance for their grant funding for their \$2.4. Also, the reviewing of the Bureau of Alcohol grant proposals that they have actually received and suggestions or recommendations to them as to what would be appropriate programs to fund. I will be part of a group that reviews the law enforcements of the grant proposals that cities and counties will present to law enforcement for funding.

Porter: So how much money is the government giving to clean up the drug situation here in Las Vegas?

Ramadan: Well, you mean in Nevada? Well, law enforcement is in the area of about \$2.4 million. BETA actually funded about \$1.6 million in treatment, rehabilitation, education and prevention. Education has about \$800 thousand in drug free school money that comes to the State from the federal government and then, of course, the State puts in or the counties put in so much money; each county puts in so much towards education, but the bulk of the money comes from the drug-free schools act, so we participate in all three events.

Porter: Just recently, I've heard you've been criticized in the press. What are they criticizing you about?

Ramadan: They had one point they criticized me about, but it's more administrative philosophy - what the government

Following is a special interview conducted by Linda Porter with Nevada's Drug Czar, Mujahid Ramadan.

had defined that my role is versus what other parties who are involved in the War on Drugs, primarily the former chairman of the Commission, Bob Galli, felt my role was, and there was an on-going debate in terms of what my role was between Bob Galli and myself. And then, of course, Bob Galli and the Governor and his staff, and it came to a point where ultimately the Governor said my role will remain the same. I think one of his big concerns was my high profile and ability in terms of the public. That's where the governor's request that that goes on, because beyond the funds that we receive for the War on Drugs, we really need the general public involved, and the best way to get the general public involved is to make sure we constantly talk to them about the problem and how to provide them with avenues to get involved in the War on Drugs. Example is that next week I'm involved in the same thing that I've been receiving criticism about, so obviously my profile has not been changed. I'm touring rural northern Nevada to communities who fear the same thing that the percentage of criticism has been about, that the governor feels is necessary and I feel is necessary and actually the bulk of the Commission feels is necessary.

Porter: So are some people saying that they don't want you out there?

Ramadan: I don't think it's some people as much as it was one individual who made a threat about my religion, LONG WITH THAT THE FORMER CHAIRMAN. Bob Galli's ideas, more than everything, that there wasn't enough money in the legislative package that created my position and the commission. Well, we knew that going in, so I didn't choose to spend time complaining about what was not available. My attitude was to do what I could with what we had and know where we were headed.... And that's what I chose to do with it. Along with that, to set up passports and substance abuse councils and commissions. To help those with this right is beyond the commission itself. I'm talking about people who will directly involve themselves with the War Against Drugs. I'm talking about just having meetings and developing strategies. The War on Drugs can't wait for strategies. We need to make the public involved now. We can go out and help parents of abusers, the social organizations and certain clubs and churches and get them involved now...

Porter: When they came up with this Drug Czar position and they offered the position to you, first of all, why did you take the position and secondly, who were you competing with?

Ramadan: I welcomed the position. I didn't compete with anyone. The governor came to me and asked me would I accept the position, never realizing the outreach that will be in the way, realizing the communication in terms of funding, in his position or he wanted someone that he felt could effectively communicate with the public, the magnitude of the problem and getting the general public of Nevadans involved. So he said, "I think you're the best person for the job," so I was offered the job. I didn't go out soliciting the position.

Porter: Why you?

Ramadan: I have a long history of working with people, and working with organizations to accomplish various things that we have set out to do. When everyone who never believed that gangs were a problem in Southern Nevada, I went to work, working first volunteering my time working with gangs. And people were saying there aren't any gangs around and half of them still didn't acknowledge that there were gangs. And we effectively set up networks here without money to contact gangs in Southern Nevada and I think that was one of the main things they looked at; someone who could do the job and would not look at how much money I would have to do it with. It's this huge big thing where I have all this control, but a person who is willing to go out and work hard and not complain, and as of yet, and at this point and time, I have not complained. I have not even attacked my critics in the Media yet.

Porter: So you're saying that the Governor chose you because you were effective and qualified and not just so he

could fill the position of having a Drug Czar in the State of Nevada?

Ramadan: No, he didn't want to do that, because he could have actually selected someone else to just fill the position.

Porter: So who wants your job now? Evidently all this criticism is for something. Did they not think this position was going to be as big as it is turning out to be, and now some other people want to be the Drug Czar?

Ramadan: I couldn't say some other people want to be Drug Czar, but I think that it has turned out to be a very high profile position. Other than the Governor, maybe out of all the Executive Cabinet members, I may be the most visible in the State other than the Governor. And now, I can't say for the people that are having a problem with that; maybe they're saying that's not my role, but the Governor is saying it is my role, and as long as he's the Governor and he's giving marching orders, then I take those orders from him.

Porter: What type of relationship do you have with him?

Ramadan: A very wonderful relationship, very good relationship. We communicate very well. We see the necessity of State and citizen involvement. We see the necessity for citizen involvement in this. Neither of us feels that it's going to be money; it's not going to be police, it's not going to be treatment. It's going to be education, prevention and the general public galvanizing, being galvanized to get involved with the War on Drugs and effective contacts. It's a change in values. Along with those other things, we need strong law enforcements, and I'm very much in favor of strong law enforcements. I've seen how citizens become prisoners in their own home when there's no strong law enforcement, how children can't play in the front yard, can't go to the park when there's no strong law enforcement, so I'm for strong law enforcement. But we have to get the people who are using drugs to change their attitude and people who are guilty of simplicity of allowing them to use drugs... We have to get that attitude changed, and when we do that, then the law enforcement can go back to dealing with burglarism, purse snatchers and bank robbers. The problem is while it's a personal problem, it's also a social one.

Porter: What projects are you working on now?

Ramadan: Well, we're continuing now to move aggressively towards establishing the state strategy, because there were some obstacles, major obstacles with the former chairman in his methodology in relating to me and it was difficult to accomplish, so we're moving aggressively along that area. We are now preparing to begin disbursement of the \$2.4 million for law enforcement to city, counties and different units throughout the State. I am embarking upon an effort to get task forces on drug councils set up throughout the State; that's part of my rural tour in Northern Nevada next week, to accomplish that. We'll continue to have public hearings to evaluate the information that the Commission is formulating to get the strategy together. We want the public to hear what the Commission is putting together so in that way they can get in their input and say, "well, this is missing and this is missing," or we want the public to agree with what we're going to deliver to the Governor.

The interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Nevada's Drug Czar will continue in next week's issue of the Sentinel-Voice.

AGC Annual Picnic Planned

The Associated General Contractors will be holding their Annual Company Picnic on Saturday, May 5, 1990 at Sunset Park. The picnic is planned for all AGC members to bring their job-site crews, office staff and management.

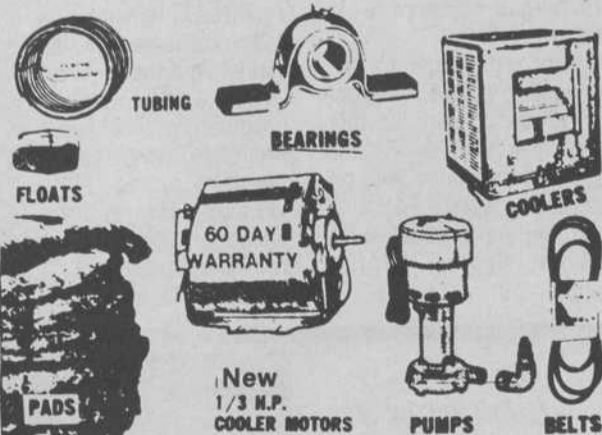
The day will feature volleyball and horseshow tournaments, games for the

children, baseball and good ole fashioned hamburgers and hot dogs.

Price for the day includes all the food you can eat...tournament prizes, door prize drawings and game prizes.

Deadline to register for the picnic is Monday, April 30, 1990. For more information call Kim Head at 796-9986.

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