

The Portland Tribune

Fired Portland Immigrant Liaison Threatens Civil Rights Lawsuit

By Jim Redden

January 23, 2019

Well-known immigrant and refugee community coordinator Ronault 'Polo' Catalani was terminated last September while off work because of stress, lawyer say.

Attorneys for longtime Portland immigrant liaison Ronault "Polo" Catalani have notified the city they intend to sue over his termination last September.

Catalani, who was first appointed to the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs by former Mayor Tom Potter in 2008, is well known within minority communities and local news media. He was terminated while off work because of stress, according to the Jan. 23 tort claim notice filed by attorneys Beth Crieghton.

Catalani says he has worked for more than 35 years to integrate immigrants and refugees into the community, including the last 10 years for the city. He insists the threatened lawsuit is intended to pressure the city to live up to its promises.

"This is a lawsuit about moving our liberal mainstream's commitment from pretty speeches to more equitably sharing of our city's benefits and burdens," Catalani says.

Anne Downing, a David Douglas High School teacher who serves on the city's New Portlanders Policy Commission, says Catalani's departure is a huge loss for the city.

"Polo has been actively working to make Portland a better city for its refugee community, which now makes up 20 percent of the population and is growing faster than the city can accommodate," says Downing, who teaches English as a Second Language classes to immigrant children and has known Catalani since 2009. "He has been a wonderful mentor to me, and helped me understand how I can do my job better."

The lengthy notice says Catalani intends to sue for racial discrimination, retaliation under state and federal law and for discrimination and/or retaliation for taking family leave. It documents a series of incidents stretching back many years where city officials and employees have allegedly mistreated Catalani because of ethnicity and religion. The notice says Catalani intends to seek unspecified financial damages.

The notice claims that several personnel rule violations alleged against him were both unfounded and contrary to his personal and religious beliefs. Among other things, the notice says city officials falsely accused him of drinking alcohol at work, while the consumption of alcohol is against his Muslim religion. It described that accusation as a "rumor that would certainly damage his professional, familial, and personal reputations in substantial numbers of Southeast Asian, North and East African, and Middle Eastern, faith communities."

The notice not only says that the city discriminated against Catalani, but that it has never fully committed to the programs where he worked. Among other things, the notice says the City Council never fully funded the immigrant and refugee affairs office after Potter left as mayor the following year, but that Catalani was subsequently shuffled from bureau to bureau and worked under seven different managers, preventing him from helping to develop the systems and secure the funding necessary to integrate immigrant families into the life of the city.

"The City has proven unwilling to officially adapt its structures to accommodate the work that Mr. Catalani was asked to do as the City's liaison between Portland's newcomer communities and City government," the notice reads, adding, "City policy leaders and managers have failed to commit to policies and practices in support of Mr. Catalani's position responsibilities."

in addition, the notice says Catalani's position was downgraded twice during his tenure, being reclassified from Program Manager under Potter to Program Coordinator and then Program Specialist, even though he was to perform increasingly complex and even additional non-immigrant program responsibilities. Catalani most recently worked in the Office of Community and Civic Life, which is under Commissioner Chloe Eudaly.

"He was set up to fail in ways big and small," says the notice.

Catalani was born in the Republic of Indonesia and raised between there and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which once claimed it. He first moved to Oregon with his family as a refugee sponsored by the late Oregon U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, eventually graduated from Willamette Law School and opening a firm in Salem specializing in immigration and refugee cases before moving to Portland in 1986.

After being hired by Portland, Catalani and the programs he started or worked on have won numerous international, national, state and local awards. They include a Partners in Charity Award from Catholic Charities just last year.

City Attorney Tracy Reeve says she is unable to comment on potential litigation.

You can read the tort claim notice [here](#).

Willamette Week

Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty Said White Men Were Hogging the Microphone. They Didn't Like That.

By Rachel Monahan

January 23, 2019

They called and emailed with angry, often racist screeds.

Two weeks into her job, City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, the first black woman to serve on the Portland City Council, launched an unusual and pointed broadside against the disruptive gadflies who interrupted her first council meeting, and many before.

"I am concerned about how privilege, and, specifically, white male privilege, is limiting the public's access to City Hall," she said in a statement Jan. 15. "These disruptions create a chilling effect on people who are unaccustomed to coming to our City Hall to have their voices heard."

Hardesty was describing a familiar phenomenon at City Hall: protesters, many of them self-proclaimed "cop watchers" live-streaming their own remarks, who monopolize council meetings with hostile screeds.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, white and male and no fan of the disruptions, endorsed Hardesty's analysis as "factually correct." But the comment raised the hackles of some constituents. Of the more than three dozen calls and emails from the public that followed, Hardesty's office reports a lopsidedly negative reaction.

"Sadly, there have been some negative—and racist—comments, reaffirming parts of our white supremacist history, which hurts my heart," Hardesty tells WW. "Regardless of these outsized voices, though, I believe in the majority of Oregonians who are building our next, more inclusive chapter of our state."

Here's a sampling of the public's response to Hardesty's statement. The emails, obtained from Hardesty's office, have been edited for length and clarity.

Was it always your plan to insult a huge portion of Portland's men or did you just think of it recently? What a sexist, racist, misandrist, ignorant thing for you to say. Not only did you say it, you took it further and broadcast it to the media. I can understand you saying such a thing like that in the privacy of your own home, but no, you have to "Get Whitey" right up front.

Until you apologize just as publicly as you insulted and impugned 80 percent of Portland's White men I will never vote for you nor will I support any policies you might try to push.

If you think I'm some alt-right Trump Republican, I'm not. I'm a liberal Democrat who voted for Bernie. Even though I've never voted for a Republican in my life, I absolutely will not put up with your "Identity Politics" and your race baiting. So until you clean up your act and apologize, you will have one more constituent who will work his damndest to remove you from office.

-Chris Kienle

Puhleeze... Last time I checked my reservoir of karma, I've expended way too much dealing with obnoxiousness from all kinds and colors of people. Obnoxiousness is not a quality determined by one's DNA. Get a grip!

If you wanted to stop this, you could draft etiquette rules that would pass U.S. District Court muster. That would be a positive contribution to this mess. All you've done is contribute to the level of discord.

You're not off to a very good start. That chip on your shoulder is going to get mighty heavy mighty fast if you keep saying this kind of stupid shit!

-Steve Witten

Your comments regarding white privilege people who are disruptive in City Hall was uncalled for. Your comments regarding white privilege shows the racism that you carry on you should not be a commissioner in Portland, so next election year we will see if you still hold that seat.

-Shawn Baker

You may be a black woman in charge, but that is no right to turn the tables and not only see color, but also complain publicly about the behavior of a race. THAT'S RACISIM[sic]!!!!!!

YOU ARE A BLACK BIGOT!!!!

-Dave Hoffman

At the very least, you owe the entire city of Portland, and especially white males, a very genuine, heartfelt apology. There's nothing in my life that was handed to me because I'm white, and male.

I've worked my ass off for everything I've got, and I willingly give of myself to my community, and to those in need, including three young black boys who played basketball on my son's team, two of whom had fathers in prison.

They couldn't afford their uniforms, so I bought them for them. They couldn't make it to games, so I drove to North Portland to pick them up, and then I would take them home. Sometimes, I would have them stay over for parties with the other boys on the team. There are a lot of good white males in this city, and you just insulted all of us, just because of a few unruly ones you have a problem with. You, Jo Ann, are a racist, and you have no business being in that position.

-Charles Heath

The Skanner

Markisha Smith, Ed.D, Named Director of Office of Equity and Human Rights

January 23, 2019

After an extensive search and interview process informed by input from community stakeholders, Commissioner Amanda Fritz is pleased to announce that Markisha Smith, Ed.D, will be the next Director of the City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights.

Dr. Smith comes to the City after serving as Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the Oregon Department of Education for the past five years. In that role, she provided leadership, guidance, professional learning, and support to school districts, various education partners, and community-based organizations on education equity throughout the state. A resident of Oregon since 2011, Dr. Smith served as professor at Warner Pacific College and Western Oregon University, and as an equity trainer and strategic consultant for Metro and the Camas, WA school district, among other local contracts. Dr. Smith also brings nationwide experience from working in Michigan, Texas, and other states, in addition to her focus on equity issues in Oregon.

The mission of the Office of Equity and Human Rights is to provide education and technical support to City staff and elected officials, leading to recognition and removal of systemic barriers to fair and just distribution of resources, access and opportunity, starting with issues of race and disability. As Director, Dr. Smith will initially lead a team of eleven staff and manage a 2018-19 budget of \$1.9 million.

“Dr. Markisha Smith brings the right combination of institutional, government and communitybased equity work to her new role,” said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, Commissioner-in-Charge of the Office of Equity and Human Rights. “I am grateful to Interim Director Dr. Koffi Dessou for his work leading the bureau over the past year, and I am grateful he will continue to provide experienced senior leadership in the Office. I thank the 30 people, both City staff and community members, who participated in the interview process, as well as Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Hardesty who interviewed the finalists and support this decision. I look forward to supporting Dr. Smith and bureau staff in advancing citywide equity goals in the months ahead.”

Dr. Smith said she is thrilled to continue her journey as an equity champion as Director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights. “There is an urgency to sustain equity work as an asset, through equitable outcomes, high expectations, meaningful engagement and consultation, and

through honoring the rich and diverse experiences that have influenced the bureau's creation and development over the past seven years. It is imperative that organizations examine systems of oppression in order to interrupt their power and influence on marginalized communities" she explains.

Dr. Smith will begin her new role on February 11, 2019.

OPB

Portland 911 Bureau Explains Why It Sent An Officer To Hotel Racial Profiling Incident

By Amelia Templeton

January 23, 2019

A 911 call released Wednesday corroborates key parts of a man's account of being racially profiled and kicked out while he was a guest at the Portland DoubleTree by Hilton hotel.

Jermaine Massey, from Kent, Washington, was staying at the DoubleTree while he was in Portland for a concert in December. He said he was talking on his phone in the lobby when a security guard asked him to prove he was a guest or leave. Massey accused the guard of being racist, and began filming the encounter — which later went viral on social media. A hotel employee called 911 during the incident.

[OPB received the 911 tape through a records request.](#)

The call lasted just over one minute. A DoubleTree employee told a dispatcher he was calling about a man who was arguing with security.

"Did they mention any weapons or anything, or is it just verbal for now?" the dispatcher asked.

"No, just verbal so far," the employee answered.

Asked for a description, the employee said Massey was an "African American male, wearing all black, he's got a cellphone out recording us."

The dispatcher asked a second time if there are any weapons involved, the hotel employee confirmed there were not, and the dispatcher said someone will respond shortly.

Massey was not arrested and the police officer who responded to the incident offered to drive him to another hotel when staff decided to evict him from his room.

Portland's Bureau of Emergency Communication told OPB that dispatch sent an officer because the call was categorized as a "disturbance in progress," a type of call that includes verbal arguments or fights about to occur.

"We use seven priority levels, with the top three immediately being dispatched. All 'disturbance in progress' calls (including this one) are classified as a priority two because of the potential threat to a person, whether or not the threat is real or perceived," said Dan Douthit, the BOEC spokesman.

Doubletree later publicly apologized to Massey and fired the two employees involved in the incident.