

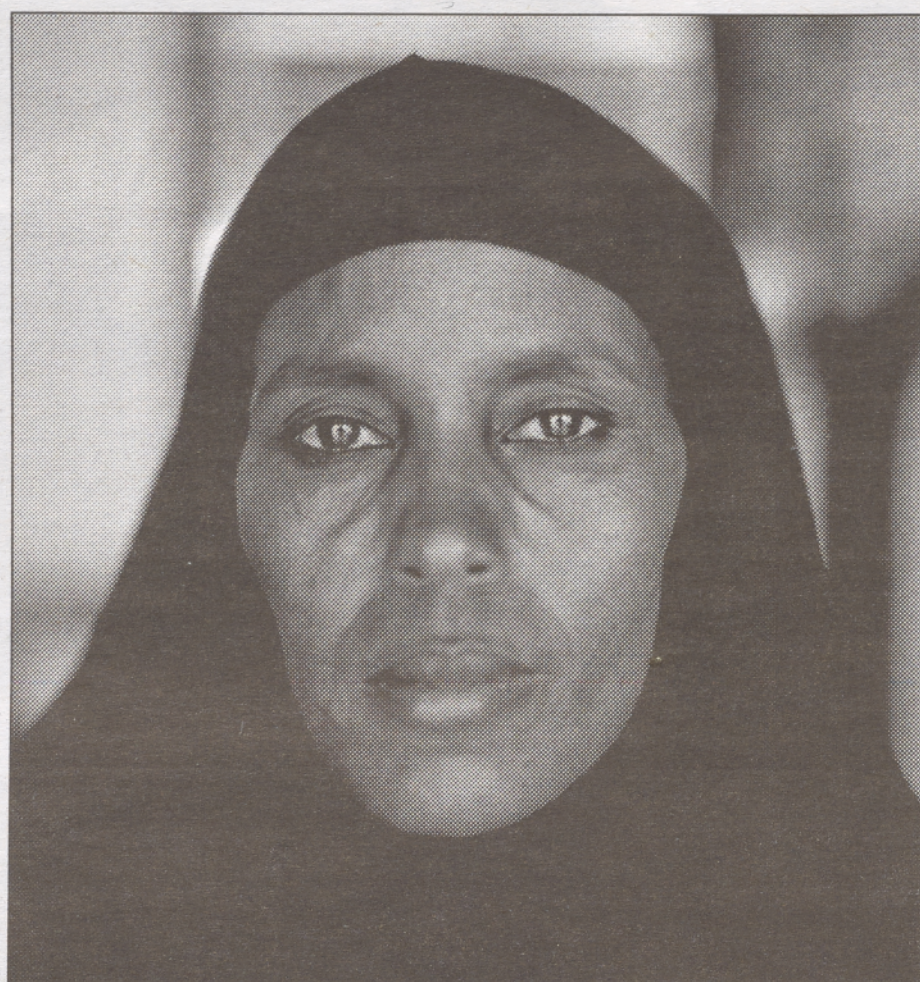


PHOTO BY FAZAL SHEIKH

From the series, "A Camel for the Son," this photo of Abshiro Aden Mohammed was taken in a Somali refugee camp in Kenya in 2000. She was the leader of the women's group. One day she handed Fazal Sheikh a manifesto that described the inequalities between men and women in her society.

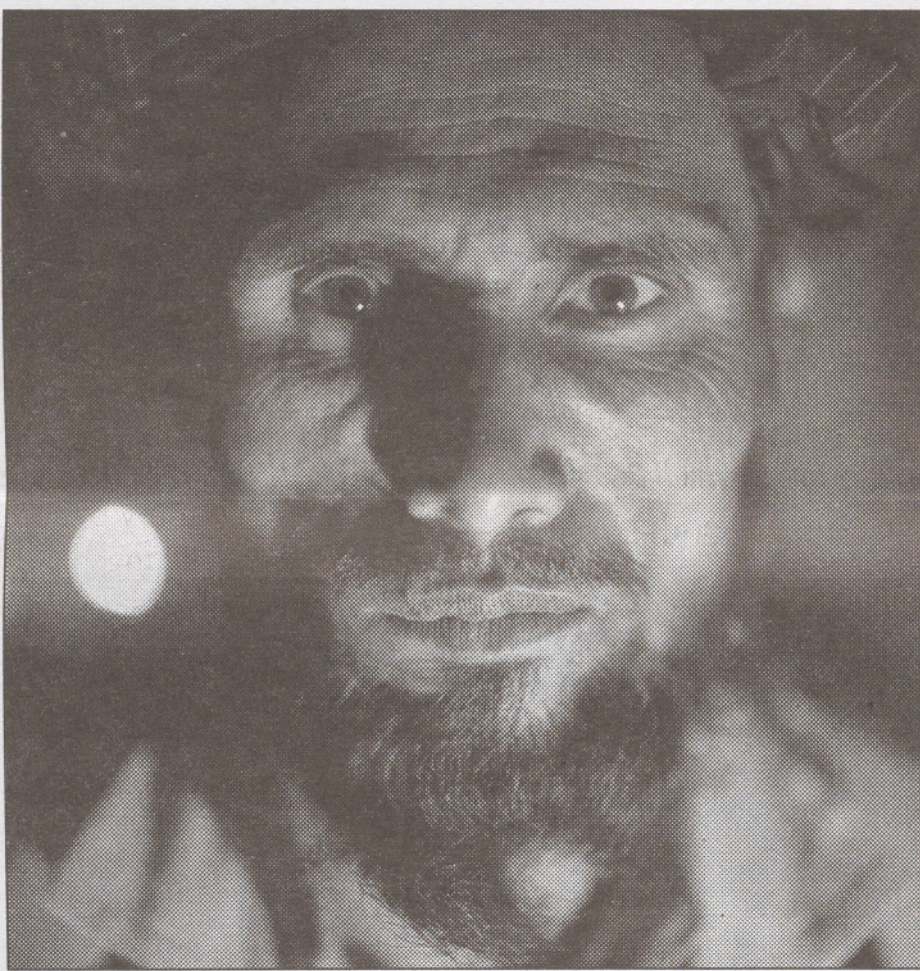


PHOTO BY FAZAL SHEIKH

Abdul Manam, part of the series "The Victor Weeps," in a refugee camp in Pakistan in the late 1990s.

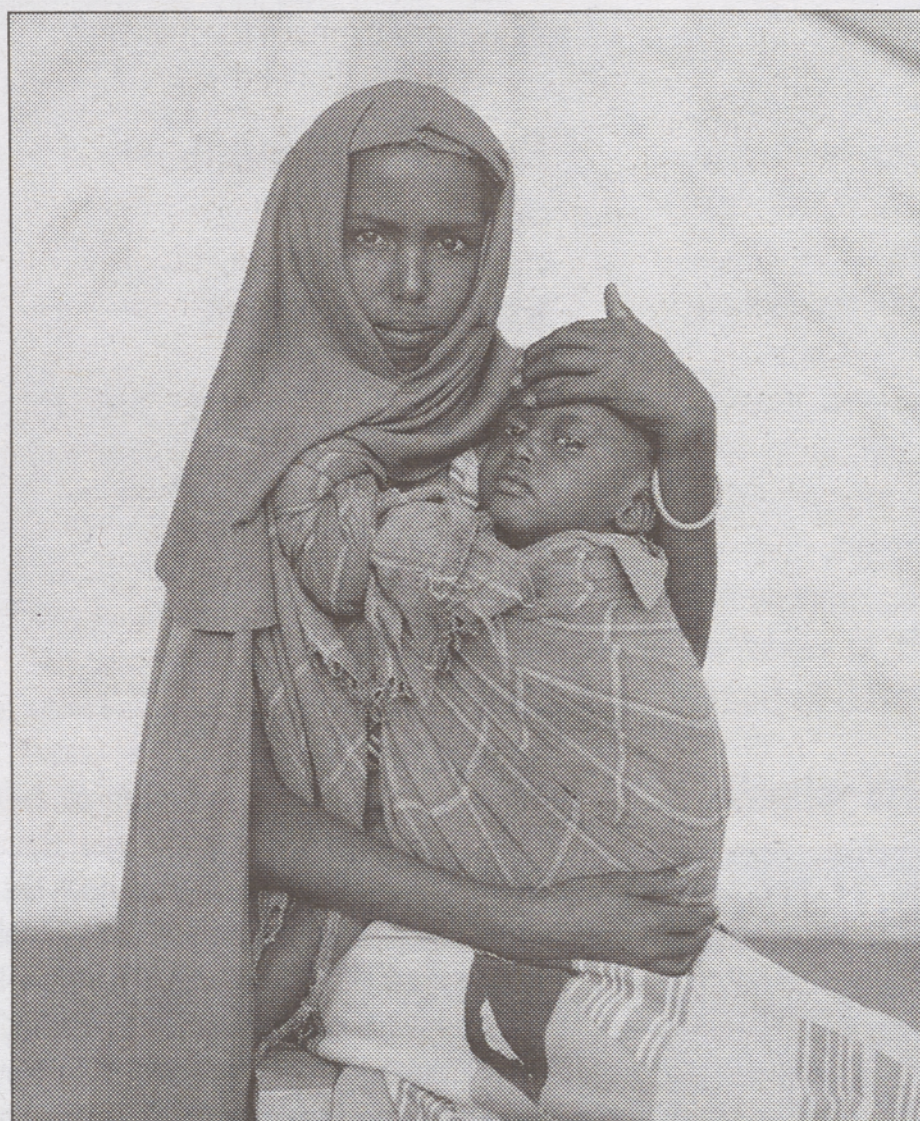


PHOTO BY FAZAL SHEIKH

Alima Hassan Abdullai and her brother Mahmoud photographed in 1993 for the series "A Camel for the Son," in a Somali refugee camp in Kenya.

Humanity CAPTURED



PHOTO BY EMILY GREEN

Fazal Sheikh's "Common Ground" exhibit at Portland Art Museum features more than 170 photographs.

Fazal Sheikh's documentary-based photography brings worldwide human rights issues to light. His work is featured in 'Common Ground' at Portland Art Museum.

BY EMILY GREEN
SENIOR STAFF REPORTER

"Common Ground" fosters an illusive impression of intimacy between the viewer and the viewed.

The new exhibit at Portland Art Museum features more than 170 photographs, most of them portraits depicting victims of circumstance; people whose lives were forcefully reshaped through poverty, social banishment and war. But sitting on the other side of Fazal Sheikh's camera, the exploited are granted a rare moment of power.

Sheikh photographs his subjects only as they wish to be portrayed, resulting in captivating portraits that exude a sense of dignity and calm that are often lacking in images of disenfranchised people.

For nearly 25 years, Sheikh has documented the occupants of refugee camps and other marginalized communities around the world, serving as a conduit through which they tell their stories.

"Common Ground" leads visitors through an elegantly displayed collection from eight series of photos taken primarily in East Africa, India and Pakistan between 1989 and 2013. The names and tales of displacement of those featured accompany many of the portraits.

The exhibit winds to its conclusion in an

interactive educational room featuring a wide array of books, along with photos of Burmese refugees who have resettled in Portland. This space is a partnership between the museum and Portland Meet Portland, a nonprofit that works with newly arrived refugees. Visitors will have the opportunity to pose written questions that local refugees will later answer. The room also displays a map where refugees indicate areas they feel "safest" versus "least welcome" in Portland.

"It's a wonderful way for people to feel a little more integrated into the exhibition," said Julia Dolan, Portland Art Museum photography curator, during a sneak peek.

Sheikh, 52, was born and raised in Manhattan but spent summers growing up with his father's family in Nairobi, Kenya. After graduating from Princeton University in 1987, he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to travel through Europe and along the Eastern side of Africa to photograph. Shortly after apartheid ended in South Africa, he began to wrestle with displacement as he documented people who had been pushed outside of Johannesburg. Soon after, he headed north to Kenya to photograph refugees. He was bothered when he saw photojournalists come in and out of camps

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