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'City of Roses'



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PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Elsa Mengis of Portland (left) fights to keep her adult son from being deported out of the country because of his immigration status, drawing support from a family friend, Sonya Damtew, in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in Portland.

## Mother fights for son to stay in the United States

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One Portland family is doing everything it can to keep their adult son, a nearly life-long Portland resident, from being deported to a war-torn country in Africa because of his immigration status.

Thomas Amanuel, 38, was just a one year old child when he left Eritrea with his mother, Elsa Mengis, right before a military coup deposed the country's emperor.

The family lived hidden for three years before coming to the United States, and

# Detention Limbo

when they arrived here they were not familiar with the process of fully naturalizing. Years later, Amanuel said he had no idea he was undocumented, and today he has spent almost four years in immigration detention, while his elderly mother and community fight for him to stay in the

United States.

Before being locked up, Amanuel was the main caretaker for his elderly mother, who is a U.S. citizen. The caring relationship has drawn the support of Caring Across Generations, an organization that has gathered over 5,000 signatures in sup-

port of stopping his deportation.

On Wednesday, the group, along with supporters from Portland's Center for Intercultural Organizing, delivered their signatures to the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement building, downtown, holding signs and raising their voices in hopes that they could keep him from being deported.

If deported, Amanuel could be sent back to a country he does not know, and which has no record of him due to the political instability and changing regimes.

At this point, he is housed at an immigration detention center in Bakersfield, Calif., where he awaits the next step. It is unclear where things might go, since the government cannot immediately de-

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