

Global Journalist: Openly Gay Minister

Abstract: On this Aug. 07, 2003 program Global Journalist asks if the election of an openly gay minister in the United States Episcopal Church minister Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire threatens to split the Worldwide Church, the Anglican Communion? On the other this program also asks guests if Saudi Arabia government sponsor the 9/11 attack?

Host: Stuart Loory

Guests:

- David Jones
- Dr. Hooman Paymani
- John R. Bradley
- [Jane Lampman](#)
- [Mobolaji Aluko](#)
- Jane Little

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Mentioned: UK, US, Gay, Lasbian, Angelican Church, Nigeria, religion, President Bush Administration, terrorism, Saudi Arabia, Bin Laden, 9/11.

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SPEAKERS:

Stuart Loory, David Jones, Dr. Hooman Paymani, John Bradley, Jane Lampman, Jane Little, Mobolaji Aluko

Stuart Loory 00:16

Welcome to Global Journalist on KBIA. This is the program that says mid Missourians indeed many Americans are interested in international news. I'm student Loory of the Missouri School of Journalism. The Anglican Communion, an organization of 38 different churches with 77 million members in 164 countries began 500 years ago when the Roman Catholic Church refused to recognize a divorce by Britain's King Henery the 8th this week. Another deeply personal situation, the election by the United States has Episcopal Church have an openly gay minister Dan and Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire threatens to split the Worldwide Church apart and a longtime relationship between the world's major oil consumer, the United States, and the major oil producers Saudi Arabia may be in serious trouble. The problem is a report on the September 11, 2001 bombings that implicates a Saudi government worker, the Bush administration has kept the pages dealing with that situation secret, the Saudis wanted made public. The two international splits, one religious, the other political are the subjects for today's program to discuss the Saudi Arabian American relationship we have today David

Jones, international editor of The Washington Times in Washington, Dr. Hooman Paymania a columnist for Asia Times Online in Geneva, Switzerland and John Bradley managing editor of the Jeddah Saudi Arabia based Arab news. To discuss the Anglican Church turmoil, we have Jane Lampton religious writer for The Christian Science Monitor in Boston, Massachusetts. And Mobolaji Aluko an online columnist for Nigeriaworld.com, and NigerDeltacongress.com. He is also a professor of chemical engineering at Howard University in Washington. Let's start with Saudi Arabia, John Bradley, why is it, that the Saudis want to make a report that appears to implicate them as as perhaps financing to a great extent Al Qaeda? What do they want to be public?

John Bradley 02:49

When they want it made public so that they can defend themselves? I'm not sure, if I think the key word in your question is in implication. There's a clear implication but most of the people who read it, read these pages and subsequently commented on them have said that there is no tangible proof that the suspicion that Saudi money made its way to terrorists or terrorist organization. With knowingly given by the Saudi royal family. There is some proof that apparently that the money, ended up there, but not that it was given in a deliberate fashion by the House of Saud. So, obviously, if these facts get out, then the Saudis feel that they will be able to put up a pretty spirited defense. What they're doing at the moment is feeling that they're the victims of insinuation in a sort of smear campaign.

Stuart Loory 03:45

David Jones? I imagine that you are pretty well up to date on the report, at least from the Washington point of view, what do you think, is it a smear campaign,

David Jones 03:55

You know, there are a lot of people in Washington who don't like Arabs, period, there's others who are very for legitimate reasons have been concerned about Saudi Arabia for a long time. And certainly the no question that in Saudi Arabia from our time has supported a rather extreme form of Islam and has funded charities and and schools and so forth in any number of countries and spreading this Wahhabi faith which has become a breeding ground for a lot of the terrorists or indirectly there's good reason to be suspicious. The report itself from what I read, apparently, this is Omar Albahumi who supposedly befriended to the hijackers help them get settled in San Diego and gave them money and so forth. He was working for the government. It was he just being the nice guy. It is in the culture, it's natural to try to help a new person to welcome them. This is pretty much part of Arab culture. According to the report, from what I read, it says this guy was probably an agent of the government, without offering proof of that says he may have reported to Saudi officials again, apparently without offering proof. So, you know, there's a lot of speculation and supposition involved in here, which is why it's upsetting to everybody. As far as the Saudis, their foreign minister rush to Washington went in to see President Bush obviously still has very good access, and is welcome here. Did not get the report released, but didn't even seem to be all that unhappy as he was leaving very interesting of the reports to say, at least we have showed people we have nothing to hide. And I think part of this was they, even if they didn't get it released, they were able to show the American public that they were ready and willing to have it released and from public relations for the chief to is part of what they were after.

Stuart Loory 05:39

Dr. Hooman Paymani pay money, you are more or less detached from the story living in Geneva, Switzerland. How does it appear to you? Is there a deep Saudi involvement with Al Qaeda or is Saudi Arabia being as we say bomrap by this reporter or what?

Dr. Hooman Paymani 05:58

What I have found it unrealistic to suggests that the Saudi government directly or indirectly, assisted at some point in the past Al Qaeda, because that organization has a main objective, which is the overthrow of the Saudi government. So, it doesn't make sense for the government of Saudi Arabia to somehow help the group which which is six to 16 destruction. Going through the public evidence information, I didn't have not found any strong evidence to actually implicate this with the government. There are some speculations about as the other participants mention about the the possible friendship of of Saudi person voting for this for that government with to the terrorists who turned out to be involved in the September 11 attacks on the United States. That really doesn't prove anything. And at first it shows that perhaps that person was somehow suspected about the activities of those people and and if the sugestion is through that he probably worked for this to the Secret Service or was he was spying and on Saudi dissidents, they asked if he doesn't prove anything more than that perhaps the Saudi government was was suspicious about the activities of certain Saudi national in the United symbols trying to keep an eye on them. So I really do not see any strong evidence, any proof or and in anything to somehow give me at least any idea that how that how the Swedish government could be involve in this.

Stuart Loory 07:30

Okey, if we could ask David Jones, David, do you think it's possible that the Bush administration does not want to make this public because 28 pages are so vague?

David Jones 07:41

You know, there's probably several reasons. One reason they say is because they don't want to reveal the real sources. And this is a very real and powerful concern within the intelligence community, that they really hate for anything to get public that reveals how they get their information and I gather some of this information that came from like, FBI informers and so forth, and they may be trying to protect that part of it, there is also a sense that Saudi Arabia is helping in the war on terrorism and they don't want to something that's going to embarrass the Saudis and possibly interrupt that cooperation that they're getting. It's a delicate line. And same we see in Pakistan where there's still a sense, Pakistan government is looking at the other way. It's some bad things that are happening, but another way they're helping us and we're not willing to blow the whistle.

Stuart Loory 08:28

Yeah, Dr. Hooman Paymani makes a good point when he says that Al Qaeda is interested in overthrowing the Saudi government, as well as doing great damage to the western world. Why would the Saudis be helping that?

David Jones 08:41

Well, the Saudi family is very big, I think at the highest levels of the family. Absolutely. They're not the visual mode of the country after 1991, when you became a problem that but preferred. You was a big

hero in that country for many years before that during the fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. A lot of people became very close to him. This is a very large family with many members, all of whom have lots of money to throw around. And it's entirely possible that some mid level members of the family and lower levels know feel some kind of ties and loyalty to them and will continue to support them. I don't think at the highest levels that makes any sense.

John Bradley 09:18

John Bradley, what about the Bin Laden family? They have been able to maintain their position in Saudi Arabia, haven't they? Yeah, indeed, I went out to the outskirts of Mecca the other week with a couple of Bin Laden's nephews, and we had a picnic and we drove out for we'll have some sand us, which is what the the young kids do here to, to entertain themselves and they were talking about changing their names. It's been the government has agreed it seems that been the Bin Laden family can in fact, change their names on their passports and on all their official documents so, that when they traveled abroad, they won't be they wouldn't be stigmatized in the way they are now. But as far as their dealings within the kingdom are concerned, things are absolutely normal. In fact, the one Bin Laden, I know he's in his early 20s and he is at a college studying in Jeddah. He is the he is suffering the reverse from any kind of fallout of being associated with his uncle. In fact, he's, he's revered by most of the fellow students in their town.

Stuart Loory 10:37

Have the Bin Ladn's in Saudi Arabia completely cut their cut with Osama?

John Bradley 10:43

But it seems that what, obviously the the standard official line is that they completely cut their ties many years ago, but there is talk that some members of the Bin Laden family did maintain contact with him up until the Afghan war and there's also told that he was slip slip back into Jeddah in the late 90s to attend a wedding. But there's no proof or any of that what I mean, David was saying something interesting about the Saudi royal family being so large that inevitably, that means that it's very diverse. And so to talk about the Saudi royal family being like this, or, or like that is really a non starter because like most families, you know, there are lots of people who have different opinions. And I think the Bin Laden family too. It's nowhere near as big as the asylum, but it is a large family. And so inevitably, you will get different reactions from different parts of the family, different generations and son on.

Stuart Loory 11:11

Do you any of you have any concern that the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia will will split seriously, David, you go first on that?

David Jones 11:56

You know, a lot of speculation about what were the underlying reasons for the war in Iraq. And what keeps coming back is the idea that some people in the administration had decided that Saudi Arabia could not be trusted over the long term and by liberating iraq from Saddam, that we have made ourselves less dependent on Saudi oil. I think there are at least some people in the ministraton, who do see that there will be a long term split and have already gone about, you know, it making ourselves less dependent on them and making that more possible. Okay, we are a

Stuart Loory 12:29

We are a little short on time. John Bradley.

John Bradley 12:33

Yeah, I think there's no, the certainly in the long term, the relationship is going to be redefined very dramatically. The Iraq oil is going to take five to 10 years to make a big difference, but it is going to make a difference. Similarly, the Americans don't need Saudi Arabia militarily anymore, they shifted down here to Qatar. And so, for both of those reasons, the Saudi's, I think, to be frank, I really am for it, give it five to 10 years and we're going to see very dramatic developments on the US Saudi front.

Stuart Loory 13:08

Dr. Hooman how do you feel about that?

Dr. Hooman Paymani 13:11

Well, I think this American administration has nothing very positive of Saudi Arabia to start with there is a concern, at least shared by some of this administration's influential people that Saudi Arabia in the long term will not be as stable. So, if there is a problem, a future stability there is a concern that the country cannot be relied on for, for the long term interest of the United States, the Persian Gulf. So, I believe that actually, some people even that administration doesn't mind to see a regime changing in Saudi Arabia perhaps in the near future, but whether they are going to get themselves involved directly or try to actually create or generate something of that nature, and that's what that is going to be visible at least in the short term.

Stuart Loory 13:56

Dr. Hooman I'm sorry, we have to take a break. This is Global Journalists on KBIA. I'm Stuart Loory. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Global Journalist. You may listen to this program again, ask questions or make comments by going to www.globaljournalists.org or in mid Missouri by calling us at 573-882-9641. Let's move now to the controversy in the Anglican Church. As the result of the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in Minneapolis. There is thought that this will split the church perhaps in the same way that the Anglican Church originally split from the Roman Catholic Church 500 years ago, because of the divorce of a British King Henry the Eighth how possible and how likely is this Jane Lampman of the BBC, who has now joined us. Would you like to go first on that?

Jane Lampman 15:06

Sure. Well, I mean, certainly we've had a lot of opponents of the election of Gene Robinson talking about a schism for quite some time. And of course, before Gene Robinson was elected, and before this whole controversy, we had a similar one in the UK over canon Jeffrey, John, a gay man appointed to be Bishop of Reading. He was under such pressure that he would draw before he was even consecrated in order to he said, to preserve unity. And so I mean, there is the real threat of a breakup here, having said that supporters of Gene Robinson and those who were devastated that Jeffrey Johnston down is saying, we've heard it all before over the ordination of women, for instance, here in Minneapolis in 1976. And it never happened. And on the other hand, it has to be said that homosexuality and this

issue does seem to go much deeper. And there's all sorts of Political and theological and cultural battles going on within this. So, it does look like the most serious crisis to face the Anglican Communion.

Stuart Loory 16:10

Professor Aluko Nigeria's Anglican Communion or Anglican Church is perhaps the most conservative and I think also the largest. And this movie's been condemned in Nigeria, is it likely that the church there was split away?

Mabolaji Aluko 16:30

Well I mean, this is the sub time that the Nigerian church the Anglican Communion in Nigeria, which is about 17 million. Out of the 17 million is been given an opportunity to to say something, I mean, when the New Westminster diocese in Canada approved a same sex marriage, the Bishop of Nigeria led a group of 15, I believe economists call themselves concerned primates to declare inpad communion with, with the diocese and when Canon John I believe was to be was appointed and of course he finally decided not to take it on, the Nigerian communion also threatened to resign, though I mean to, to pull out of of that I mean, the one for UK is I believe is probably more serious than the one for the United States primarily because the the, the spiritual head comes from the UK and the US is only 2 million people. So, I would think to that Nigerian communion will declare impaired communion and move on. I don't think that it will this in particular will result in a split but it again depends on how the rest of the community and takes it.

Jane Lampman 17:57

I have to chip in, I have to chip in there, Jane, I have to chip in and suggest that I feel that it's a serious but it's more serious is this crisis here caused by the election of Jene Robinson. He is the first openly gay and non celibate Bishop within the Anglican Communion. Jeffrey john agreed to be celibate, and that didn't wage those who were against his appointment. We've got a lot, a large broad spectrum of opinion against homosexual priests. Some say they're okay, as long as they're celibate. Others say they're not. And, you know, Jeffrey, john was forced to step down. But this is a huge crisis for the Angelican community.

Mabolaji Aluko 18:38

As you say the United States has been traditionally thought of as being a liberal country. I mean, so it is not a huge surprise that something like this will occur. I mean, I would, I would tell you, I would almost say that it's a Nigeria. It will even be surprised that there are Anglicans in in the US I mean, When you say Episcopalian, it does not quickly jump into the minds of Nigerians or even many Africans, that they are part of the Anglican Church.

Jane Lampman 19:10

I'd like to jump in here to this is Jane Lampman, I think it's very interesting, however, that the Archbishop of Nigeria's statement that came out after the approval of Cannon Robinson indicated very strongly that they were extremely disappointed but also that they would be working closely with the people who oppose this in the US and he even said, we will do all it is necessary to actualize this bond in practical terms, and quote, so it seems what I think is given an additional impetus to the possibility of

split is there seems to be quite a strong relationship between the conservatives in the US and Anglicans elsewhere such as particular archbishop Akinola.

Mabolaji Aluko 20:03

And I think that there was a group of American Episcopalians who wrote in in solidarity with the, with the belief system, concern prymatt. So there is it, there is a bond and I well, it is acctually earlier I believe,

Jane Lampman 20:23

before I said that Jane little here and five years ago at Lambeth Conference of the worldwide bishops in Cannes Britain in England, we saw this campaign has already started this has been going on for a while and we see these loose networks and often not that loose networks of people at affiliating across different nations. And there was talk at Lambeth, the lambdas conference of evangelical conservative American bishops getting together with African bishops and Asian bishops to strategize they were expecting this battle. It's not that much of a surprise and you know, that how true it is that money's been, you know, funneled to African bishops and that they're, you know, basically setting up a real, concrete network. And we don't know that yet, but it certainly sounds likely here we're talking with already ahead of this vote, heard threats from Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria and have a dramatic realignment of Anglican Communion. So, they have been plotting this for quite some time.

Stuart Loory 21:28

Well the realignment of the Anglican Communion generally, but Jane Lampman how about in the United States? Is the Episcopal Church going to split?

Jane Lampman 21:39

Well, I think you have the real possibility of members and some parishes perhaps perhaps even some diocese is that might take that step. I think they're going to be very deliberate about this. They're planning to meet in Texas in October. Those who are extremely concerned and decide what their response would be But I certainly have talked with some people who feel very deeply about this. And I think they're the question will be how really how widespread This is whether this is a split or simply a splinter, I guess you could say, conservatives, Jane, conservatives in Minneapolis, and very quickly after the election of Gene Robinson was confirmed and announced, as Jane says, The the meeting in in Texas and they also, they also put it in the strongest possible terms that they believe the Episcopal Church in the United States had put itself outside of the Anglican Communion. And they said they wanted to continue their relationship with the Anglican Communion. The clear implication of that was, you know, we are no longer a part of the Episcopal Church. Having said that, I didn't observe a massive walkout as some had predicted yesterday and I think that its people its language games, it's semantics at the movement, and but they're important. They're not using the term that we've broken away in a setting up our own church. And it's a lot of mundane matters here. We've got expensive property, we've got pension funds, we've got collection plates, there's all sorts of mundane as well as that serious principle.

Stuart Loory 23:17

Or all the practical considerations.

Jane Lampman 23:21

Absolutely.

Stuart Loory 23:21

Yeah, meeting in Texas in October at the same time Bishop Robinson, if I may call him Bishop now in October will be off to London, I think a week before he is ordained or not to London, but to England to speak in Manchester, at a meeting of a gay Anglican group. Why is he doing this? Is it a lack of sensitivity on his part, or is he doing it to prove a point?

Jane Lampman 23:54

And what he been booked for some time to do that, and he's supposed to be the keynote speaker This event in Manchester, there are a lot of connections between gay and lesbian advocacy groups in within the church in Britain and the US. And, you know, there's a sense of solidarity there that they've not been fully included. And certainly the, I suspect, it's meant to provide a boost as well to the gay and lesbian community within the church in the UK, who are bitterly disappointment or bitterly disappointed over the withdrawal of Jeffrey John, from his appointment as Bishop of reading. They saw that as a huge blow for the church. And also, they were furious with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Ron Williams, who himself supports such inclusion he is on the liberal side, but the poor man's walking a tightrope here trying to hold a very very fractious Anglican Communion together. And many people felt Jeffrey John was sacrificed and now believe that he was sacrificed and pointlessly because we now have a gay bishop. Anyway.

Stuart Loory 25:01

How large is the gay and lesbian movement in the church? Who wants to go on that?

Mabolaji Aluko 25:09

I guess, I guess. gay, gayness and lesbianism is in such a private individual orientation is just now it's, it's coming out more more closely. I doubt if there will ever be a census of that done.

Jane Lampman 25:28

I couldn't venture, this is Jane Liampman speaking I couldn't venture to give any figures but there are certainly very active groups within a good number of the churches. And I think this is what it's given impetus to it in the us is that these are church members who want to be full participants in the church and so you have, like integrity within the Episcopal Church and reconciling ministries within you United Methodist. There are groups within each one of the denominations. And so they have been the ones that have been pushing for this. And and the responses is a pastoral response. In many cases, those who support them feel that they have to recognize the pastoral needs here. And so I think there are some significant movement within certainly within each of the mainline churches and then there are some who,even when in relation to evangelical churches.

Mabolaji Aluko 26:35

This is not to deny the fact that there are serious, serious problems against homosexuality in the Bible. I mean, it's it's not the church is not just a compact between individuals who decide to do one thing or the

other. They're the Christian churches based on the Bible and there are serious serious injunctions against homosexuality in the Bible and how you interpret the scriptures and that's how the debate focused in on

Stuart Loory 27:07

I'm sorry everybody, I'm Sorry to say we are out of time. Our guest today has been David Jones, international editor of The Washington Times. Dr. Hooman Paymani a columnist for Asia Times Online in Geneva, Switzerland. John Bradley, managing editor of the Arab news of Jeddah Saudi Arabia. Jane Lampman, religion writer of the Christian Science Monitor in Boston, Jane Little religious affairs correspondent for the BBC in Minneapolis and Professor Mobolaji Aluko online columnist with Nigeriaworld.com and Nigerdelta.com in Washington DC, our directors Pet Acres, our producers Yusuf Kalango and Sarah Katan for all I'm Stuart Lorry Global Journalist will be back next week.

Sarah Katan