

## The Party-Crashers

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 30, 2009 NCR Today

Icky! That is one word that leaps to mind when you look at the photos of the world's most famous party crashers, Tareq and Michaela Salahi. Their name will now become shorthand for the cancer in our culture that thinks fame, at any cost, is a good thing, the cancer that creates shows like *Real Housewives of Wherever?* and which confers significance upon people like Paris Hilton, the cancer that destroys basic standards of privacy and decency and then celebrates the destruction.

Of course, in the world of the Salahis, they have already received the worst form of punishment. They have been exposed as frauds. The whole world now knows that they were not invited to the White House state dinner, that they are not the life of the party, no matter what the photos on their Facebook page show, that this is a couple for whom the only reality is their own reality, that they genuinely seemed to revel in the clicks of the cameras and the flashes of the bulbs as they sashayed in to the White House as if they belonged, even though behind the smiles they knew that they would have to look around to figure out their escape before the appetizers were served.

I remember the day Anna Nicole Smith died. I had just started on the exercise machine at the gym, which had a television set right in front of it, so there was no escaping the news bulletins. Ms. Smith had been stricken and taken to the hospital. Ms. Smith was in the operating room. Unconfirmed reports that Ms. Smith had died. Then, confirmed reports that she had died. Through it all, I couldn't answer the question: Who is Anna Nicole Smith? Why couldn't I think of a single accomplishment of hers that warranted such intense media focus? When I got off the machine, I called a friend who told me: *"She is famous for being famous."* Only in America.

Of course, the Salahis deserve more than the exposure of their fraud. They should go to jail. The poor Secret Service officer who, mindful of the rain and aware that sometimes names don't appear on the correct lists, waved them past the first checkpoint will likely face stiff disciplinary measures, perhaps even losing his or her job. Did the Salahis think of such a consequence when they planned their photo-ready romp across the South Lawn? Did they realize what a difficult job the Secret Service has to bring with and how they just made it more difficult? Did the Salahis think of how the news of their charade might obscure the actual reason for the dinner, the celebration of American-Indian relations, an important issue now relegated to the inside pages while their smiling, fraudulent smirks grace the front pages? Of course not. They are the type who think only of themselves. They are the modern day equivalent of the Marquis St. Evremonde, someone to whom every one else is merely in the way.

Now, they are selling their story to the highest bidder. No one should pay, but if someone does, the Salahis' profits should be turned over to the Secret Service benevolent society. And, while Michaela looks fabulous in so many outfits, I itch for the chance to see her and her hubby in orange jailhouse garb. The *"real housewife"* has become like that horrible show's fictional inspiration, a desperate housewife. Let her and her husband ponder their fame in a cold, damp jail cell. Anyone for the *"real jailbirds"* of DC?

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