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Racial Profiling After 9/11?

Yes

Amidst the attacks on September 11, 2001, racial profiling of South Asian or Arab individuals has undoubtedly increased dramatically. Even though full integration and assimilation of Arabs and South Asians in our nation is yet to exist, immigrants from these countries have lived in the United States for over a century. Fear of difference has caused Americans to have a heightened sense of alert, which in turn creates racism and discrimination. With the media supplying volumes of pictures of potential terrorist, Americans began to point the finger at any individuals of a Middle Eastern or South Asian descent as a possible terrorist. As Homeland Security beefed up and has been put on a high level of alert, Arabs and South Asians have faced scrutiny, racism and racial profiling, not only in the United States, but all around the world. Racial profiling of Arabs have been found in, but not limited to, restaurants, grocery stores, taxis, buses, trains and most commonly in air ports.

Racial profiling may be defined as “any use of race, religion, ethnicity or nation of origin by law enforcement agents as a means of deciding who should be investigated, except where these characteristics are part of a specific suspect description”(Wrong Then Wrong Now/ 11). Since 9/11, the Department of Home Land Security has evolved into a tight nit security operation which has racially profiles against individuals with Middle Eastern or South Asian characteristics. Arabs and South Asian individuals have been subject to numerous “random screenings,” at air ports simply because of physical characteristics. For example, three men from Toledo were suspected terrorist and the FBI had a spy conduct an investigation on the three of

them. All three were arrested on suspected terrorist charges and later all found guilty. Not only have Arabs and South Asians been subject random security searches, but have even been detained by American law enforcement and agencies in lieu of the 9/11 attacks and the enactment of the Patriot Act. Even though the government is yet to release the names of the detainees, those who were arrested were done so simply do to country of origin. "On Nov. 9th, 2001 Attorney General Ashcroft ordered the FBI and other law enforcement officials to search out and interview at least 5,000 men between the ages of 18-33 who had legally entered the U.S. on non-immigrant visas in the past two years, and who came from specific countries linked by the government to terrorism"(Sanctioned Bias/ 5). Racial profiling of Arabs and South Asians has wrongfully detained innocent civilians and immigrants, causing many to be subject to interrogation and deportation. Not only have thousands of innocent individuals been racially profiled against, but now when one wishes to come into the United States, they must register with the National Security Entry Exit Registration System. (Sanctioned Bias/ 6). Any individual (i.e. those from Middle Eastern or Korea) who refuses to register may be subject to immediate deportation.

Case in point, racial profiling of Arabs and South Asians has undoubtedly change post 9/11 attacks. The level of fear America currently has is precedent to that of WWII and days of the internment camps. With legislation and assistance of the president, racial profiling has in form become legalized. Random searches, detainments, interrogation and spying will continue to plague Arabs and South Asians as the War on Terror continues. Just like after WWII, Arabs and South Asians will be subject to racial profiling years after the War on Terror is declared to be over.

No

Vincent Cannistano, a former head of CIA counterterrorism does not believe in racial profiling as being an effective tool, and does not condone it. He states, “ It may be intuitive to stereotype people, but profiling is too crude to be effective. I can’t think of any examples where profiling has caught a terrorist” (Fighting Terror/Words of Caution on Airport Security/1). The Department of Homeland Security does not allow its employees to racially profile. Many law enforcement agencies have been taught not to view the individual’s physical characteristics, but by the “warning signs” of a possible attack or threat. With millions of individuals with Middle Eastern and Asian descent, it would be outlandish to consider every individual a potential terrorist. Crime rates in America may be viewed using things such as the Uniform Crime Reports which shows that crime rates are highest amongst whites, blacks, and Latinos. If our law enforcement agencies were racially profiling against Middle Eastern and South Asians, then one would assume the arrest rates of these individuals would surpass any other racial group, and it simply has not happened.

One main source Arabs and South Asians claim of racial profiling is from the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act was enacted to provide surveillance and investigation of any suspected individual of committing a potential crime or terrorist act. Millions of individuals have had their phones tapped into by intelligence agencies. Regardless of national origin, any person residing in the United States may be subject to investigation, with or without their knowledge. Many Americans have objected to this act stating an invasion of privacy is against their civil rights and rights to privacy. However, even though many Americans object to the Act, if asked, they would agree with wire tapping an Arab or South Asian who may be a “potential security threat.” The Patriot Act may have help prevent possible terrorist attacks in the United States. Facts of cases

against individuals may be held from the public for different reasons. One, by releasing information to the public, other individuals who have been related to the individual may flee the country or tip off others. This would obviously create a potential risk to national security. There have also been several investigations which have led to arrests of individuals who have been potential terrorists because of the Patriot Act.

Reports of racial profiling of Arabs and South Asians have also hindered potential investigations from beginning or continuing in fear of legal action. Even if an individual was undoubtedly guilty, the fear of racial profiling has stopped many court cases from convicting actual terrorists. Just recently, the driver of Osama Bin Laden was proven guilty by a panel of military officers. The court case was under intense scrutiny of racial profiling. The driver's defense attorney pleaded, that being a driver of a terrorist does not make him an actual terrorist and that he was innocent. He also stated that since he was Muslim and an Arab, the U.S. was racially profiling against his defendant. More over, the U.S. was accused of giving an unfair trial to the driver for having a panel of hand selected individuals from the Pentagon (victims of the 9/11 attacks). The U.S. found the driver guilty of aiding a terrorist and has been sentenced to life in prison. Other debates of racial profiling come from Guantanamo Bay Prison Facility.

The U.S. has been accused of racially profiling, detaining and incarcerating individuals and sending them to Guantanamo Bay and not taking the prisoners to trial. A former U.S. Army Chaplain who served at the prison, was actually detained himself. The Army chaplain was detained not only on suspicion of espionage but for having documents chaplains should not have. The chaplain was found to have a layout of the prison, a document which not only is highly classified, but simply should not be in the hands of a chaplain. The chaplain was then detained and interrogated for years in regards to why he had the documents. Even though the chaplain

himself was Muslim, he was released and cleared of any legal action. National security has become a top priority in our nation since 9/11.

Case in point, the United States undeniably has had an increased level of security. With the aid of the Department of Homeland Security, the Patriot Act, and the men and women of our armed forces, terrorist have been killed or detained all around the world. Since our nation has declared a War on Terror, it does not matter what race, religion or ethnicity one belongs to. Racial profiling is not being used to detect potential terrorist, but the behaviors and acts in which they do so.

Works Cited

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