

## Profiling: The Destruction of a Dream

By Daniel Baker

On a hot August afternoon in 1963, a strong spoken Alabaman preacher stood in the shadow of perhaps our greatest president and proclaimed his dream to America. A dream that one day, boys and girls of all races will be able to join hands as true brothers and sisters. A dream that one day, men will finally be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. A dream that one day, America will finally be a nation where all men are truly created equal.

Today, the powerful words of Martin Luther King Jr. no longer reflect the dream of a single man or race, but rather the shared dream of an entire nation. We, as Americans, have adopted King's dream as our own, and in many ways his words carry more significance, more meaning than ever before. They have almost become a Constitution in themselves, an unofficial second standard that we consult. King's vision has evolved into our country's long-standing goal; a nation where men are indifferent to race, ethnicity, and religion; a nation where men are at last as equal as the Constitution declares; a nation that is, in essence, colorblind.

Still, many roadblocks stand in the way of America realizing this dream. One of these is racial, ethnic, and religious profiling. Draped in a blanket of false security, profiling is a misguided insult to this new American dream. While in theory it may make the world safer, in practice profiling causes nothing but fear and hatred, driving a lasting wedge between subscribers of different beliefs and backgrounds. If most would agree that a colorblind world is a peaceful world, why then should we insist on profiling? In

doing so we only peel our eyes further open to the things in which we wish we were blind to. And so, we continue to live in a world dominated by fear, a world that will continue to discriminate, a world that will forever hate our differences.

Not only does profiling according to race, religion or ethnicity fail to make the world more secure, it actually succeeds in making the world much less secure. History reveals this truth to us. For example, the Holocaust, probably the most infamous act of genocide in history, was the direct result of an extreme sort of religious and ethnic profiling. In the aftermath of World War I, an economically devastated Germany profiled Jews as the scapegoats for the country's hardships. With newly appointed chancellor Adolf Hitler adding fuel to the fire, this blame and ill feelings soon escalated into searing inferno of anti-Semitism. This growing hatred, coupled with the new belief in the purity and superiority of the Aryan race (another case of racial profiling) led to the animal-like extermination of six million Jews. In addition, between sixteen and twenty million others were killed because they did not fit the prototypical definition of blonde-haired, blue-eyed Aryan beauty. In all, ethnic, religious, and racial profiling paved the way for the murder of over 20 million innocent people.

But the tragic, catastrophic effects of profiling are not just exclusive to a lone example of extremity. Numerous cases of genocide in our world's history can be attributed to the profiling of religious or ethnic groups, usually the minority. In Rwanda, Bosnia, and Sudan ethnic and religious minorities became the helpless victims of discrimination, hatred, and eventually, genocide. More examples arise every year of how dangerous racial and religious profiling can be, and sadly many examples come at the

expense of innocent lives. While on the home front, profiling yields no results of mass murder, its undeniable negative effects are being felt by countless racial and religious minorities alike.

On September 11, 2001, America suffered the worst terrorist attack ever on US soil. In all, over 3,000 were killed in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania to a senseless act of terror. However, the dead and wounded, the friends and families of those who lost their lives were not the only victims that day. In the almost five years that have passed since that tragic day, American Muslims have undeservingly been suffering the consequences of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. Despite sharing no likeness with these terrorists other than heritage, Muslims, as well as other Middle Easterners, found themselves guilty by association in the eyes of the American public. Thus, anti-Muslim hate crimes skyrocketed over the next year, taking cover under a misguided sense of patriotism. Many Americans, ignorant to the fact that the Islamic faith has as little to do with Al-Qaeda as Christianity does with the Ku Klux Klan, equated all Muslims with the horrific images of 9/11.

The American public, however, is not the only ones profiling Muslims as potential terrorists. With the increase in government power and surveillance since 9/11, Washington is also using the profiling of Muslims to prevent another such attack. Under the Patriot Act, the government has the authority to search private property of all its citizens if they deem it necessary. As a result, thousands upon thousands of Muslims and other Arabs faced discriminatory questioning, arrests, and for many, even deportation. And while the government may claim this profiling to be vital to National Security, they

have regardless violated thousands of individuals' civil rights. This specific case of the government's religious and ethnic profiling, combined with the post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiments of the American public has helped create, whether intentionally or not, the idea that being Muslim equals being a terrorist.

Muslims are not the only ones in America suffering from the alienating effects of profiling. In fact, African Americans are still, perhaps, the most discriminated against of all racial and ethnic groups. An excellent example of racial profiling is a new law enforcement phenomenon known as "DWB" or "driving while black." It is a fairly commonplace practice now. A police officer will pull over a driver under some phantom traffic violation with the suspicion that the car has been stolen, or the driver has committed some other, more serious crime. The driver just *happens* to be black. In actuality, this act of discrimination is just as coincidental as it is obvious. And again, despite claims that this racial profiling promotes security, in truth all it accomplishes is feeding the ugly beast of prejudice and racism.

Even after just two examples of racial, ethnic, and religious profiling (and in reality, there are so many more) the blatant, glaring hypocrisy of America, and especially its leaders is terribly obvious. The same federal government who decries the numerous racial and religious stereotypes assigned in our nation, through their own discriminating actions, does nothing but reinforce them. The same government agencies who claim to uphold and defend the basic civil liberties of the people, all the while, deliberately and openly violates them. The same government that proclaims so proudly the creed "All

men are created equal,” the same government who celebrates the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. simultaneously spits in the face of him and his dream.

Martin Luther King’s dream was that men’s hearts could be strong enough to make our stubborn eyes indifferent to our differences. And we are different; all of us are. That is what makes America so great—its diversity. While in every other country in the world, people, for the most part, look and talk similarly, the United States is a nation represented by people from all sorts of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, traditions, and heritages. We are truly, as School House Rock once put it, the Great American Melting Pot. Our differences should be celebrated. Yet due to racial, ethnic, and religious profiling, we instead regard our differences with fear and hatred. And as long as we persist on profiling, judging others according to race, religion, or ethnicity, we will continue to live in a world that chooses false security over true equality. As long as we continue to profile, our nation, our world can never be one that fully realizes the glory of Martin Luther King’s dream. As long as we continue to profile, King’s dream will never be anything more than just a dream.