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“Racial, ethnic, or religious profiling makes the world more secure.”

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion has persisted for centuries, dating back to ancient times. The primary cause of racial profiling in the modern world seems to be the illusion of its necessity in protecting society’s well-being. From the Jim Crow laws of the late nineteenth century to the discrimination against Japanese-Americans during World War II, it is clear that historical periods of racial discrimination are remembered with bitterness and regret. In 1940, Earl Warren, who would serve on the United States Supreme Court during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, spoke out against profiling, stating, “...all aliens...have attached themselves to the life of this country in a manner that they would hate to change and the majority of them will, if given a chance, remain the same good neighbors that they have been in the past, regardless of what difficulties our nation may have with the country of their birth.” With each generation that passes, the American population works toward a more tolerant society, one devoid of bigotry and hate. Indeed, it is this ideal, the vital hope for acceptance, which truly fosters immigration and enhances America’s greatness. Thus, it is nearly impossible to understand why we continue to discriminate based on racial, ethnic, or religious origin yet expect a more intelligent reaction from future generations. Without a fundamental shift in the goals and ideals of our society, discrimination in the form of profiling will eventually destroy the façade of the American Dream and unveil the true nature of a society filled with bigotry and hate.

Profiling has come to be seen as an effective method of ensuring safety. Recently, profiling based on race, ethnicity, or religious origin has moved to the forefront of

security measures applied after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. However, there are two fundamental problems with profiling based on race, ethnicity, or religion; these reasons show that profiling is not only an underhanded, racist tactic, it is also completely ineffective.

Racial profiling does not take into account individual tendencies within a population. Even taking into account the assumption that people of Middle Eastern descent are more likely to commit a terrorist act than those in the Caucasian population – which has not been proven – we cannot be certain that racial profiling will actually reduce the risk of terrorism. Placing added emphasis on people from the Middle East simply allows terrorists from other nations an easier time in accomplishing their goals. A single terrorist of Caucasian descent will find it easier to pass through security measures if officials are only expecting criminals to be of a particular race or ethnicity. For example, for days after the Oklahoma City bombings of 1995, police used the majority of their resources to surveil and scrutinize the actions of two men of Middle Eastern descent. However, we have since learned that the act of terrorism in Oklahoma City was perpetrated by a young white male. In this case, racial profiling actually proved disadvantageous to the goals of the police and extended the length of their investigation. Similarly, because Al-Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the September 11th attacks, has an extreme religious orientation and is not based on ethnicity, profiling of racial or ethnic groups could facilitate terrorist attacks by non-Arab Al-Qaeda sympathizers, such as John Walker Lindh, an American.

Another negative aspect of profiling is that it alienates an entire race, culture, or religion, a result which serves only to further propagate anti-American sentiments. In this way, racial profiling spreads a pervasive sense of unease throughout the population, thereby promoting terrorist activity rather than reducing its occurrence. American hostility in the Middle East has proven to foster the growth of radical religious acts of violence; but the portrayal of American citizens with Middle Eastern heritage as dangerous individuals has also been shown to promote terrorist acts, both domestically and abroad.

As a member of the Sikh religion, I have developed a unique perspective on religious profiling. Following the basic tenets of my religion, I keep long, unshorn hair, covered by a small turban. My unorthodox appearance has elicited a variety of responses throughout my lifetime, but perhaps none are more demeaning than those rooted in religious profiling. Though I have come to accept additional security checks within airports as a required step in order to travel, I have yet to see any substantial safety statistics that emphasize the necessity of these measures. On the contrary, studies published by the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People actually refute the notion that certain racial groups show a greater tendency to commit crimes.

Supporters of profiling as a security measure argue that had racial profiling been more fully employed in the months and years leading to the September 11th attacks, those acts of terrorism would not have been carried out. However, this is a purely speculative viewpoint and any conclusions based on this perspective are completely hypothetical.

In 1996, when ruling in the case *Whren vs. United States*, the Supreme Court decided that it is unconstitutional for a representative of the government to make decisions based on race. Therefore it is clear that the Supreme Court views discrimination based solely on race or ethnicity to be unjust. This view ought to extend to all instances of racial persecution, from even the slightest infraction to the grandest acts of abuse.

Profiling based on religion, ethnicity, or race, beyond being completely ineffective, is also unnecessary. Moreover, forcing members of certain groups to undergo additional security checks based solely on their appearance is humiliating and degrading. Though America is revered as a tolerant nation, its inability to discontinue discriminatory acts such as profiling tarnishes its reputation. In fact, America should strive toward creating a society in which profiling is not seen as an acceptable practice; this America would attempt to reduce the alienation of all groups, whether they are of racial, ethnic, or religious orientation. If we can work together and embrace our differences, we will have created a happier and safer society than we live in today.