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The Pros of Profiling

"I have this painful recurring dream of the security guards at Logan [airport] on September 11, carelessly waving all eighteen [terrorists] through, while strip searching long lines of black women with bad hair days" (Williams 174). As ridiculous as this statement may sound there is more truth to it than one may initially think. Through or history, America has been concerned about the fact that the country has had trouble with overcoming racism. In fact, almost everywhere one looks there is some program to help level the playing field, so all Americans have equal opportunities. This is seen in college entries, political elections, and employment in the work force. Because of the racism that this country has been trying to eliminate, the nation has disapproved of and shunned programs and philosophies like profiling.

American citizens need to know that profiling is not a way of discriminating against minority racial groups. Profiling is evaluating whether someone may be harmful to the public based on one's physical appearances, characteristics and whether they are in a suspicious situation. It is meant to help security and

police officers find those who may be a danger or a threat to American citizens. One of the biggest areas that profiling can now be applied is in the fight against terrorism. Terrorists are a danger to all American citizens, the most recent example being the 2001 September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Through profiling the United States can prevent terrorist attacks on the nation, which will make the country safer and make our citizens feel more secure.

Profiling has not been easily excepted because Americans never give it a chance for a thorough explanation. They sometimes hear it, act as if it is some type of bad word, and quickly reject it. Profiling is not legal power to beat up those who do not fall into the Caucasian class; it is using a physical description of a person or group of people who are considered to be criminals or dangerous to the public. Physical descriptions as well as the time of day, type of car, and luggage are taken and applied to those that are in a situation that can prove to be dangerous for the public. Attorney Bruce J. Terris points out that profiling is used all the time to help find criminals by looking for people that match the eyewitness' description. He contends citizens don't have problems with this kind of profiling because it is "based on concrete evidence" (178). Profiling is the same procedure that police use every day, but on a larger scale. Terris describes a term he calls "commonsense

profiling," which is based on focusing on a group of people more closely, but not completely, because a member of that group is likely to do it again (178).

To make the concept clearer, Terris uses the example of the Arab terrorist hijackers of September 11 and argues that the United States should be more alert to Arabs because they are likely to attack America again (178-179). Terris also makes a good point when he says, "If we check passengers arbitrarily, we will waste precious resources On the other hand, if experts establish rational profiling criteria, we can concentrate our efforts on the categories of passengers likely to be the most dangerous" (181-182). In this case Terris is again dealing with airliners, but profiling needs to—and can—be used anywhere when stopping people for security purposes. Security personnel need to use profiling when stopping people in places where there is likely to be an attack. For instance, there is no reason for police to check a young Hispanic woman for chemical agents before taking a tour of the White House. There is no suspicion of Hispanic women wanting to blow up the White House, so officers do not need to focus on that type of group. There needs to be some kind of "commonsense" profiling while trying to prevent attack, otherwise it is less likely to catch the people who are the real threats (178). Profiling

cannot be considered racist or have a relation to it, otherwise it defeats the purpose of profiling.

Patricia J. Williams, a law professor, contends that the use of ethnic profiling will prove to be very ineffective. Williams claims "[t]he kind of profiling that seems to inform the majority of stops and searches is usually based on statistical relations so vague as to be useless" (174). Her thought is that the elements that make up profiling are too complicated to be used efficiently or effectively to almost any extent. The vagueness that she mentions when she says, "seems" and "usually" is relating to the idea that police and security officers don't make consistent or concise decisions when profiling multiple ethnicities. She believes that races are too close together in physical appearance to be properly and accurately identified. Williams also reasons that individuals who are in charge of profiling do so based on their own specific standards. The officers' opinions may be distorted when dealing with the people they encounter. Because of prejudice, Williams insists, people cannot be trusted to make objective decisions in profiling situations (174).

However, there are many generalizations in Williams' argument that can be disproved. Terris states, "Any law enforcement technique that is appropriate for some situations can be used illegally or immorally in other situations" (182).

He also affirms that the way to solve such a problem is to keep profiling in the spotlight, have a government official monitor it, and have the public and media scrutinize it so it does not get abused. It is not prejudice, as Williams would say, to stop Arabs in places where there could be a likely attack; it is being careful and smart. Security and police officers, who would be responsible for much of the profiling, are trained and responsible people in a position of trust. They make judgments for the safety and well being of the public, not because they have hatred towards another race. Not all people are saints, but there are many good and decent people that will make the right decisions as necessary. Profiling is not meant to harass people, it is merely set up to protect and preserve the freedoms and rights of all races.

America has many nationalities; it is one of the key traits about the country and most citizens pride themselves on being part of it. A difficulty with such a diverse nation is that it is harder for suspicious groups to be noticed because almost no one is out of the ordinary. Profiling will help to pick out those who are suspected of terrorism or other crimes. Syndicated columnist Samuel Francis declared in the *Conservative Chronicles* that there are "alternative societies" in the United States, created from mass immigration and have so many nationalities in them that almost anyone can lie low and go unnoticed (149). His

claim is that there can be terrorists who hide and operate in these "alternative societies" and are overlooked until it is too late and they attack (149). The diverse communities are one of the reasons that America can benefit from profiling. Profiling criteria will help focus security personnel to find the ones that may be a terrorist.

The truth is that there are terrorists at work in the world and they are trying to attack America; the question is how do they get into the United States to attack citizens? Daniel T. Griswold, Associate Director of the Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies and the author of many articles on trade and immigration, answers this question. "The problem is not that we are letting too many people into the United States but that the government has failed to keep that wrong people out" (155). Terrorists are already in the country and profiling may be used effectively to help the armed forces notice, stop, and secure any who are out to hurt or attack the U.S. Francis asserts that "the enemy is not in Afghanistan; the enemy is here" (151). If the terrorists are indeed here in the United States, then profiling will definitely help the country root out these terrorists and make America safer. Many precautions and changes in the government have already taken place to help keep terrorists out of the country.

Profiling will help redirect law enforcement agencies to identify those who are dangerous amongst the millions of American citizens. Looking for terrorists or other criminals can be very overwhelming if one does not know where to start. Profiling will help start the criteria that help find criminals and terrorists. The *New York Times* reports that four of the nineteen September 11 terrorists lived and hid without notice in a mass immigration society in New Jersey (Francis 149). It makes sense that the Arab terrorists drew no attention from law enforcement. Officers had no purpose to be highly alert to the Arabs because, until recently, there was not a reason for Arabs to be profiled.

Arab terrorists attacked the United States; according to Terris' theory is that once a group attacks they are likely to do it again so there will most likely be more attacks from Arabs. Now, out of the many different kinds of people, profiling can help set the basic criteria for officers to be more aware of Arabs in suspicious situations. The *New York Times* quoted the mayor of Patterson (the town in New Jersey where the terrorists were); he said "We have 72 identifiable nationalities here, 170,000 people in eight square miles" (qtd. in Francis 149-150). One hundred Seventy Thousand people are a lot to look after, but if there is profile established, people can be narrowed down quite significantly. Profiling will increase the chances of

finding someone who is not supposed to be there by focusing on people who are most likely to be dangerous. This is one of the key ideas about profiling; it narrows down the suspects and increases the probability of catching someone who is planning to attack the United States.

President George W. Bush has declared that there are "thousands" of terrorists activists all over the world and some are "plotting" against the U.S. and many other nations (137). The president has issued several new regulations to the government to help make the United States a safer place. One of the biggest ratifications is the new Department of Homeland Security. Within the new department, one of the four major sections devoted to improve the safety of the nation is Border and Transportation Security (139-139). These new programs are designed to increase the screening of people coming into the United States, so it is less likely that terrorists will be able to slip into the U.S. whether legally or illegally. The departments are steps in the right direction, but they don't take the place of profiling. Profiling is for the terrorists that may already be in the United States' borders. It will help stop attacks that are already underway and it will act as a backup to the Department of Homeland Security if any other terrorists should accidentally slip through a crack.

Profiling works; it will help keep America out of harm's way. Israel has its problems, but it has never sustained an attack like the attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon. Terris has been flying in and out of Israel for 20 years, totaling 150 flights. According to Terris, profiling is the reason for their success and the main tool that they use to keep terrorists out of their country. He claims that they "concentrate their attention" on those they see as the most dangerous, which has proven itself over time (179). Terris also asserts that going through security takes very little time, no more than 10 minutes including the time he waited to be questioned. Terris argues that the U.S. could adjust to the Israeli method if the country got enough manpower to handle the task (180). IT would be a lot easier and cheaper to prevent terrorist attacks by hiring more security and police officers to quickly check people in airports and elsewhere, than it would be to clean up another September 11 attack. Increased manpower would allow for increased and efficient security within a concise and timely manner. Spend the extra money on employing security, save lives, and prevent further grief of American citizens.

Profiling does not just stop at the airport. It can go everywhere and be adapted to nearly every situation. Terris reports terrorist experts have concluded the future acts of terrorism will probably "involve trucks loaded with explosives,

as in the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania" (182). Profiling is flexible. It can be adapted to fit Arab terrorists with trucks heading under bridges or adapted to trucks that are parked next to buildings that are most likely targets of a terrorist attack.

Profiling can be used worldwide. If the threat of terrorism is moved from Arabs to a new formation of the Ku-Klux-Klan, police officers could switch profiling to suspicious white males hanging around a predominantly African-American community or building. The same can be done if a female activist group, like the Black Widows in Israel, came and began suicide-bombing buildings. Profiling can be very flexible in that it can be adapted to almost any situation or group of people.

The safety of the United States can be increased simply through the use of profiling. The most appropriate that needs to be taken is to instigate a workable profiling system. The only purpose of the system is to help narrow down the field of suspects so that security and police officers have a better chance to find actual threats to the United States. Profiling is designed to pick on or discriminate against Blacks, Hispanics, Orientals, Arabs or any other ethnic minorities; it's an incredibly intelligent and proven way to look at a situation and discern how best to keep the people of America safe from terrorism.

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