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Racial Profiling & “History” Tests

A few weeks ago I received a chain email. One of many such that regularly find their way to my Inbox from concerned citizens and community leaders who feel compelled to share a revelation they believe is necessary to the very survival of all that's decent in the world but that the rest of us are somehow too blind to see. In the bloody aftermath of 9/11 there has been no shortage of commentary ricocheting around the web alerting us to the clear and present danger we face from Islamic terrorists.... *and of course* anyone who even vaguely resembles them in speech, skin tone, religion, or even opinion. In this case, the author used a rather imaginative vehicle to make the point—a history test (attached below as Exhibit A).

After taking the test, I was pleased to find that I did well (I think). In fact, the novelty of using such a test to reveal truth impressed me so much that I decided to put together a little history test of my own. Here goes....

Scott's History Test

- 1) At 9:00 AM Central Time on April 19, 1995 the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was blown up by a 4000 lb fertilizer bomb killing 168 people and wounding more than 500. The bomb went off directly beneath a Day Care Center. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
 - a) Mother Teresa
 - b) Jay Leno
 - c) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d) Ultra-conservative Christian male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

- 2) On July 27, 1996 a bomb was detonated at the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta killing two people and wounding over 100 others. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
 - a) John Kerry
 - b) Paul McCartney
 - c) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d) An ultra-conservative Christian male extremist between the ages of 17 and 40

- 3) On Jan. 29, 1998 the New Woman Health Care Clinic in Birmingham was bombed killing a Birmingham police officer and critically injuring a nurse. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
 - a) Madonna
 - b) Al Sharpton
 - c) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d) An ultra-conservative Christian male extremist between the ages of 17 and 40

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- 4)** On June 18, 1984 radio talk show host Alan Berg was cut to ribbons by automatic weapons fire in front of his home in Boulder, Colorado. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
- a)** George W. Bush
 - b)** William Jefferson Clinton
 - c)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d)** Ultra-conservative Christian male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 5)** In 16th century Switzerland a young boy was publicly beheaded for hitting his mother during an argument. This act was ordered by,
- a)** Henry VIII
 - b)** Caesar Augustus
 - c)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d)** John Calvin
- 6)** On Sept. 17, 1982 over 1000 people were brutally slaughtered at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. The deaths included many women and children. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
- a)** Sen. Ted Kennedy
 - b)** The National Organization of Women
 - c)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d)** Christian extremists
- 7)** On Aug. 10, 1999 a lone gunman entered the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, CA and opened fire, seriously injuring 5 people, including 4 children. Later that same day he opened fire on and fatally wounded a postman. This act was perpetrated by which of the following,
- a)** Tom Cruise
 - b)** Michael Moore
 - c)** A Muslim male extremist between the ages of 17 and 40
 - d)** An ultra-conservative Christian male extremist between the ages of 17 and 40

This test could be continued ad infinitum but by now the point should be obvious. So here is an extra credit question.

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Extra Credit

- 8)** In light of the "history" this test was based on, which of the following is the most appropriate response?
- a)** "Nope,I really don't see a pattern here to justify profiling, do you? So, to ensure we Americans never offend anyone, particularly fanatics intent on killing us, airport security screeners will no longer be allowed to profile certain people, and we must leave all CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN MALES between the ages 17 and 40 alone!! Let's send this to as many people as we can so that all dunder-headed attorneys and Federal Justices that want to thwart common sense feel doubly ashamed of themselves!!!!..."
 - b)** "Nope,I really don't see a pattern here to justify profiling, do you? So, to ensure we Americans never offend anyone, particularly fanatics intent on killing us, airport security screeners will no longer be allowed to profile certain people, and we must leave all MUSLIM MALES between the ages 17 and 40 alone!! Let's send this to as many people as we can so that all dunder-headed attorneys and Federal Justices that want to thwart common sense feel doubly ashamed of themselves!!!!..."
 - c)** Neither of the above.

The correct answer of course, is **c**.

Objections

By now, a flood of protests will be filling the minds of some (if they're still reading). Let's have a look at the more obvious ones.

- 1)** Yes, Timothy McVeigh was in fact a practicing Catholic. He and Terry Nichols also had ties to the Christian Identity movement which bases its white supremacist ideology heavily on the Bible, as they understand it.
- 2)** Yes, John Calvin did in fact have a young boy beheaded in his Geneva community for striking his mother during an argument (Durant, 1980).
- 3)** No, the Koran is not fundamentally different from the Bible in its encouragement of terrorist violence. Highly selective distortions of it by Islamic extremists are, but so are similar distortions of the Bible. Christian extremists could just as easily cite passages like 2 Samuel 22:35, Exodus 34:10-17, Deuteronomy 3:3-6, Deuteronomy 7:2, Numbers 31:1-18, or any of a myriad of similar passages without context or historical exegesis. No less a man than John Calvin justified the beheading of the young boy mentioned in question 5) by citing a verse from Exodus 21. My church has a hall named after him and his Bible commentaries, widely considered to be classics, can be bought at any family Christian bookstore in America. If the Koran was subjected to the same kind of thoughtful, and prayerful scholarship with which informed Christians study the Bible none of us would be gullible enough to use cherry-picked "history" tests to make statements about Islam or any other religion.
- 4)** Yes, of course the actions of Army of God, Christian Identity, and other extremists are not biblically defensible or Christian simply because their adherents claim they are, but this is irrelevant. No body of doctrine is accurately reflected in the beliefs and actions of its most extreme disciples... including Islam. If the behavior of extremists is admitted as valid evidence for suspicion against Muslim males between 17 and 40 then by the same logic we must be suspicious of similar Christian males as well.

Why? Because it's politically incorrect to single out Muslims?

No. Because it's kindergarten level critical thinking.

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For those who are more interested in being accurate than they are in venting rage, Rule No. 1 is that *you must get a good dataset*—because *if your data is flawed, your conclusions will be flawed*. Period. No if's, and's, but's, what-if's or excuses. According to the latest world census there are currently an estimated 2.2 billion practicing Muslims in the world. Of these, the CIA has estimated that at most only a few tens of thousands—about one in every 30 to 40 thousand Muslims—are in any way involved in terrorist activities, and fewer than one in 2000 to 3000 are even slightly sympathetic toward them. Regardless of what we think of Islam or any other race or religion on earth (including our own) a tiny handful of sociopaths does *not* constitute a viable sample from which general conclusions can be drawn. If this sort of thing constituted proper risk analysis we'd all be paying \$10,000 a month for car insurance.... and Allstate still would have gone broke long ago.

5) But Islamic extremists have killed more Americans than any others!! They are the biggest threat to our safety!!

Incorrect.

Huh??? What kind of politically correct nonsense is that???

The kind that can be demonstrated with independently verifiable data. The FBI and the U.S. Dept. of Justice have counter-terrorism divisions. The FBI in particular publishes thorough, annual reports on terrorist activities and threats in America. These reports can be obtained online in PDF format for the years 1996-2001 (FBI, 1996; 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000/2001). Even a cursory review of these reports reveals that the large majority of terrorist attacks in the United States are from *domestic*, not international threats. These can be broadly classified as follows,

- a) Arson, or so called "monkey wrench" crimes, perpetrated by environmental extremists such as the Earth Liberation Front. Such attacks rarely target people directly (contrary to popular belief, tree spiking incidents are almost always accompanied by reports to timber companies of what regions were spiked by the offending groups, the intention being that all logging in those areas will stop. And no, this does not justify these actions—it simply places them in a different class factually than attacks that directly target people).
- b) Attacks by Animal Rights activists, once again, usually not against people.
- c) Attacks by domestic Far-Right groups including anti-abortion groups (most of which claim to be "Christian"), white supremacy groups (many of which also claim to be "Christian" like the Christian Identity movement), and anti-government/property rights extremists.

These comprise nearly all violent domestic terrorism in America, and the third category—extreme Right-Wing terrorism—has for a number of years now been a relatively small player on this list, but it accounts for the large majority of *violent* domestic terror incidents by FBI and DOJ criteria. International terrorism including that perpetrated by Muslim extremists accounts for no more than a fraction of the number of incidents these do, but this is camouflaged by the fact that over the last two decades international terrorism has tended toward fewer, but larger impact, incidents. But the actual risk of the average American being a victim of these attacks is quite small. This can be seen as follows.

By definition, the risk of anyone being victimized by a terrorist attack is given by the probability that he/she will be in the wrong place at the wrong time when such an attack occurs. To estimate this risk we can define P_a as the probability that an average American citizen will be found at a particular geographic location at a particular time (Event A), and P_b as the probability that a terrorist attack will occur at the same location and time (Event B). If these probabilities are expressed in terms of say, the variables x (latitude), y (longitude), and t (time), then the risk $R(x,y,t)$ of Joe/Susy Average being victimized by a terrorist attack is given by,

$$R(x,y,t) = P_a(x,y,t) * P_{ba}(x,y,t)$$

where $P_a(x,y,t)$ is the probability of Joe and Susy Average being present at location x,y and time t , and $P_{ba}(x,y,t)$ is the probability that Event B will occur at the same time and place given that Event A has already

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occurred. If Events A and B are independent and uncorrelated (which they would be for the average citizen), this reduces to,

$$R(x,y,t) = P_a(x,y,t) * P_b(x,y,t)$$

A close examination of this equation reveals that $R(x,y,t)$ has absolutely *nothing* to do with the total number of people killed by terrorists—it's driven by *the number and geographic distribution of terrorist incidents*. A review of the FBI and DOJ reports on terrorism reveals that by far domestic terrorist incidents occur in far larger numbers and over a much larger geographic and temporal distribution than international ones—including those perpetrated by "Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40." Yes, more Americans have been killed on American soil by the latter group than anyone else, but only because all of those Americans were packed like sardines into a single high-rise structure that was at once,

- a) Unusually vulnerable to attack by any number of means—particularly large aircraft, and,
- b) A global symbol of First World secular capitalism and wealth, and therefore a target of high social, economic, and spiritual significance to a wide range of extremist fanatics.

Personally, I would not have worked in the World Trade center given recent history. But I also wouldn't have worked in an unprotected 100 story skyscraper that housed 1800 abortion clinic doctors, their staff, and the national headquarters of NARAL and the ACLU.

Don't get me wrong. I'm outraged by the 9/11 attacks and Islamic extremism too. But I'm outraged at *terrorists*, *not* any ordinary decent person on the street who happens to have Muslim beliefs and through no fault of their own was unfortunate enough to be born to parents of Arabic race—or for that matter, any race that looks even remotely middle-eastern to some excitable "patriot" after 5 or 6 drinks. Moral outrage and patriotism alone will not magically transform BS into truth or sloppy fact-checking into professionalism.

Last time I checked we were in a war against *terror*. So it seems to me that there's a lot to be said for actually (God forbid!) knowing that the person we're about to strip-search, lock up without due process, or shoot between the eyes actually *is* a terrorist, or in the very least that someone somewhere has half a lunch pail's worth of evidence suggesting that they might be. *Reliable evidence*—now *there's* an interesting idea....

Exit polls and nationwide voter surveys indicate that on the day of the fall 2004 presidential election, fewer than one in every 3 to 5 Americans who voted for George W. Bush could correctly answer any given question about U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Even more revealing was the fact that only one in four of these could even correctly identify Bush's *position* on any given issues indicating that they had no idea what he even planned to do about them (PIPA, 2004). Nearly 3 out of 4 believed there were WMD's in Iraq at the time of the 2003 invasion and that Saddam Hussein had a direct working relationship with Al Queda (!)—all of this despite the 9/11 Commission Report (prepared by a team *the Bush Administration* appointed) and a wealth of easily accessible information to the contrary. Hence, the concluding remarks of our history test author, who also seems to have been unaware of it. If a majority of Americans prefer moral outrage and bumper stickers to evidence, then perhaps a refresher course in Democracy 101 is in order.

Like it or not folks, real freedom involves *risks and responsibilities* as well as rights. You cannot, repeat can *not*, restrict someone else's freedom without jeopardizing your own. Yes, instituting a "Patriot" Act to put some racial, ethnic, religious, or political groups under surveillance would make America a lot safer for blonde haired, blue eyed, white Christian males like me. In fact, as many who still remember WW II can tell you, rounding them up, pistol whipping those who resist arrest, and putting them in internment camps would make me even safer.

That is.... it would until all those non-blonde haired, non-blue eyed, non-white, non-Christians in Blue voting States get fed up, revolt, and manage to get the reigns of power back.

Then, take a wild guess who'd be rounded up, pistol whipped and sent to an internment camp somewhere in the Aleutians...

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The Declaration of Independence states,

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Note the reference to *all* men—not just those of a particular ethnicity, religion, or worldview. The earliest settlers who founded the American nation came here [fleeing religious persecution](#) at the hands of those who considered their ideas to be "dangerous" enough to merit "relaxing some freedoms". They dreamed of a land where no one—*no one*—had to live without basic inalienable human rights because of their race, culture, or beliefs. So they set out across the Atlantic to create one.

And they succeeded. The shot hear round the world is still loudly and effectively ricocheting. It's up to us to see that it continues doing so. But this is going to take a lot more than bombs and "Support Our Troops" bumper stickers. Sooner or later we have to win the hearts and minds of the other 5.9 billion human souls on this planet and inspire them to embrace *freedom and justice for all* in their communities. We cannot expect to succeed in this if the "freedom" we practice at home is selective and easily dispensed with when it becomes inconvenient or unsafe. How else can we expect the rest of the world to take us seriously as ambassadors for democracy? And if they don't, do we really believe that all the military spending, invasions, and Gitmo torture rooms are going to convince them? We cannot afford to be making enemies faster than we can kill them.

Invasion of privacy, unreasonable search and seizure, denial of due process... torture: Do we believe these things are evil? Do we desire a world that is free of them?

Then we shouldn't practice them on our own soil. Period!

Benjamin Franklin once said,

"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

There are those who believe that "patriotism" means giving up *someone else's* essential liberty to purchase *their* temporary safety. Where I come from we have another word for this sort of thing—*cowardice*. I cannot speak for the Ann Coulters, Rush Limbaughs, or history test authors of this world, but to my mind there is no better way to support our troops than to be faithful to *freedom and justice for all* here at home while they are overseas in harm's way defending it—even if that means putting *myself* in harm's way with them at the airport. Personally, if I were overseas being shot at in 110 degree heat (or for that matter, huddled in an Iraqi home while my neighborhood and loved ones were being bombed back to the Stone Age by "liberators" who attacked first and read their WMD intelligence reports later) *this* kind of support would mean far more to me than all the bumper stickers, yellow ribbons, denunciations of "treasonous liberals", *and* history tests in the world.

At the height of the Cold War no one in the world had perfected the art of internal security better than the former Soviet Union... and no other country was less at risk for domestic or international terrorism. *So what!* Is that supposed to impress me? Today the former Soviet States are just as much at risk for international terrorism as anyone else—just ask the residents of Beslan, Russia.

So how many Russians do you think there are who just can't wait to reinstate the former USSR and be "safe" again?

I thought so....

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Exhibit A

HISTORY TEST

Please pause a moment, reflect back, and take the following multiple choice test. The events are actual cuts from past history. They actually happened!!!

Do you remember?

- 1)** In 1968 Bobby Kennedy was shot and killed by,
 - a)** Superman
 - b)** Jay Leno
 - c)** Harry Potter
 - d)** Muslim male extremist between the ages of 17 and 40

- 2)** In 1972 at the Munich Olympics, athletes were kidnapped and massacred by,
 - a)** Olga Corbett
 - b)** Sitting Bull
 - c)** Arnold Schwarzenegger
 - d)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

- 3)** In 1979, the US embassy in Iran was taken over by:
 - a)** Lost Norwegians
 - b)** Elvis
 - c)** A tour bus full of 80-year-old women
 - d)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

- 4)** During the 1980's a number of Americans were kidnapped in Lebanon by,
 - a)** John Dillinger
 - b)** The King of Sweden
 - c)** The Boy Scouts
 - d)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

- 5)** In 1983, the US Marine barracks in Beirut was blown up by,
 - a)** A pizza delivery boy
 - b)** Pee Wee Herman
 - c)** Geraldo Rivera
 - d)** Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

- 6)** In 1985 the cruise ship Achille Lauro was hijacked and a 70 year old American passenger was murdered and thrown overboard in his wheelchair by,

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- a) The Smurfs
 - b) Davy Jones
 - c) The Little Mermaid
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 7)** In 1985 TWA flight 847 was hijacked at Athens, and a US Navy diver trying to rescue passengers was murdered by:
- a) Captain Kidd
 - b) Charles Lindberg
 - c) Mother Teresa
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 8)** In 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 was bombed by:
- a) Scooby Doo
 - b) The Tooth Fairy
 - c) Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 9)** In 1993 the World Trade Center was bombed the first time by:
- a) Richard Simmons
 - b) Grandma Moses
 - c) Michael Jordan
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 10)** In 1998, the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by:
- a) Mr. Rogers
 - b) Hillary Clinton, to distract attention from Wild Bill' s women problems
 - c) The World Wrestling Federation
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 11)** On 9/11/01, four airliners were hijacked; two were used as missiles to take out the World Trade Centers and of the remaining two, one crashed into the US Pentagon and the other was diverted and crashed by the passengers. Thousands of people were killed by:
- a) Bugs Bunny, Wiley E. Coyote, Daffy Duck and Elmer Fudd
 - b) The Supreme Court of Florida
 - c) Mr. Bean
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

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- 12)** In 2002 the United States fought a war in Afghanistan against:
- a) Enron
 - b) The Lutheran Church
 - c) The NFL
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40
- 13)** In 2002 reporter Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered by:
- a) Bonnie and Clyde
 - b) Captain Kangaroo
 - c) Billy Graham
 - d) Muslim male extremists mostly between the ages of 17 and 40

Nope..... I really don't see a pattern here to justify profiling, do you?

So, to ensure we Americans never offend anyone, particularly fanatics intent on killing us, airport security screeners will no longer be allowed to profile certain people. They must conduct random searches of 80-year-old women, little kids, airline pilots with proper identification, secret agents who are members of the President's security detail, 85-year old Congressmen with metal hips, and Medal of Honor winning and former Governor Joe Foss, but leave Muslim Males between the ages 17 and 40 alone because of profiling.

Let's send this to as many people as we can so that the Gloria Aldreds and other dunder-headed attorneys along with Federal Justices that want to thwart common sense, feel doubly ashamed of themselves - if they have any such sense.

As the writer of the award winning story "Forrest Gump" so aptly put it, "Stupid is as stupid does."

Come on people wake up!!!

Keep this going. Pass it on to everyone in your address book.

Our Country and our troops need our support!

- Anonymous