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## The Issue of Racial Profiling and the Problem with African Americans Overreacting

People who are pulled over the most tend to have a darker skin tone. Racial profiling has been a debated about argument since the beginning of slavery, and although the days of calling our white slave owners master is long gone, we are still a slave to the justice system. When talking about something as provocative as racial profiling, there are of course two sides to this argument; the people who sees this as a problem (the ones affected by it) and the ones who don't think it exist (the ones not affected by it). For the people that see racial profiling as a problem in America, The American Civil Liberties Union have studies that show that African Americans and Latinos were far more likely to be stopped by the police than white people (CQR Researcher). African Americans and Latinos were less likely than whites to be found in possession of illegal items according to ACLU and the Rights Working Group (CQR Researcher). For those on the opposing side, they explain that the police activity matches with crime ratios not population. Police are to go to areas with the most violence, that just happens to be in urban and poor neighborhoods. When I read this it just added more interest into why I wanted to learn about this topic.

I chose this topic for three main reasons: "black people always overreact", this will affect me seeing as I am an African American woman, and are people of non-color right, are we mislabeling this as racial profiling? Growing up African American, I realized at a very young age that I was at a disadvantage for something I had no control over. I would soon know what it felt like for people to follow me in stores to make sure I wasn't going to steal and to hear the sighs, and see the glares and eye rolls whenever I was to speak my mind on something that affects me. I would realize that my skin makes me unbeautiful and a danger to society. I would realize that if I was to be killed my name would never run across a tv screen and justice wouldn't even be an option going to court. I was told a lot of the time I was overreacting and being overly sensitive but overall, I always felt misunderstood. A white person can't talk about my life, they can't talk about my struggle, they can't talk about how it feels to be black because they aren't in my shoes. Just like I can't talk about the struggle of being white, and how it feels to have a lot of negativity to come towards you because of what your ancestors and friends do as a "joke", you can't tell me to get over it and that slavery doesn't affect my life because it affected the way America was shaped. One thing I will admit though is that the media does have a way of making things seem worse than they are at times, so I know racial profiling is a thing but is this linked to the impoverished areas not having the resources and things they need. When not able to get a job, you have a lack of resources, and you must support yourself or a family you might be more likely to do something that you are not proud of. With that being the case, that

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would make people of color a target because they seem to be doing the crimes more, but that does not explain why we are pulled over more than whites. I would love to find out if this link is the twisted reason for why racial profiling is a thing. It wouldn't make it more acceptable but it would explain why it makes sense in white people's head since they are the main ones who seem to think this isn't is a thing.

Racial profiling is the discriminatory practice by law enforcement officials of targeting individuals for suspicion of crime based on the individual's race, ethnicity, religion or national origin. During a NPR broadcast a former flight attendant was interviewed about an incident of a passenger reporting another passenger as suspicious, she assessed the problem according to her training. Flight attendant Gillian Brockell was informed by an older white woman on the plane that a guy wearing a green shirt looked "suspicious" when asked what made her feel he was suspicious her answer was "you'll see" (Simon 2016). Attendant Brockell instantly labeled this as racial profiling but due to her job she had to still assess the man, through observing and holding conversation she could rule out that he was a danger to the people on the plane.

"Not being biased about our passengers - it's important for their comfort, but it's also important to protect them from terrorism. If Islamic State gets the impression the flight attendants are only flagging Middle Eastern, Arabic-speaking or Muslim-appearing customers, that's a weakness in the system, and then they can say, OK, cool, let's just go send the blonde-haired, blue-eyed guy and make sure he speaks German the whole time."

The flight attendant could have easily kicked the man off the plane to accommodate the female passenger but she didn't due to the fact that he wasn't a danger to anyone except the paranoid passenger. She also realized if she did that it would lead to a bigger problem in the future where white people would be used for these attacks more openly because no one would ever feel unsafe around them. In a difference instance around the Oklahoma border, a man and his son-people of color-got pulled over twice in a matter of thirty minutes, in which case the second stop the father and son were tortured.

"The troopers terrorized SFC Gerald's 12-year-old son with a police dog, placed both father and son in a closed car with the air conditioning off and fans blowing hot air, and warned that the dog would attack if they attempted to escape. Halfway through the episode – perhaps realizing the extent of their lawlessness – the troopers shut off the patrol car's video evidence camera" (Harris, 1999).

There is no documentation on why they were pulled over, there were no drugs found, no suspicious or illegal activity going on and there was no call in to police saying that the father and son did something, they were pulled over due to racial profiling.

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Everything isn't about race, and although it seems like minorities are targeted, a lot of minorities lives have been saved by traffic stops. These random traffic stops are to help lower the crime rate and violence and make neighborhoods that are labeled dangerous now safer spaces to live in. "The police say the practice has saved the lives of thousands of young black and Hispanic men by removing guns from the streets and suppressing violence." (Goldstein, 2013). The judge on the case Shira A. Scheindlin was accused of breaking the judiciary's code of conduct by compromising the looks of fairness surrounding the case, because she had steered the case to her courtroom when this was filed nearly six years ago. This put a halt on them getting rid of the stop and frisk laws due to them believing that they did more good than harm and they had to do a second circuit run for this case. Another instance that is a little broader is that "racial profiling" does not consider all the other factors such as if something wrong was done, if there was a warrant out for that person's arrest, if that area itself was a high crime area that was the cause for random stops, etc. Most of the time racial profiling is only mentioned when talking about traffic stops so we'll focus on that. Police officers attend town meeting where they are berated by the people of that community for not doing their job and getting these drug dealers and gangsters off the street. Then when the police start to get the same drug dealers and gangsters the community feared and wanted off the street, it's called racial profiling because it so happens that the majority of them are people of color.

"February 22, 2001, a town-hall meeting at P.S. 153 in Harlem between New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Harlem residents: a woman sarcastically asks Giuliani if police officers' downtown are paid more than uptown officers, "because we don't have any quality of life in Harlem, none whatsoever. Drug dealers can stand out in front of our houses every day, to practically invade us, and nothing's done about it." (McDonald, 2016)

Racial profiling is simply just a mental construct people of color created to make policemen life harder. Police are constantly told to get rid of drugs, keep drug dealers off the street, do their job to help lessen crime but don't arrest too many people of color. There's just no proper way to please the people, you lose or you lose in this case.

The controversy in people who believe racial profiling is a thing is that they feel every single case is racial profiling. If the person pulled over is guilty of something the community mentions that they didn't have a chance, they had a hard life, and their struggle story. If they're not guilty of anything then it is automatically racial profiling, even when there are random traffic stops in an urban area it will come back they are pulling over majority people of color because of the area. For people who don't believe racial profiling is a thing, they are ignoring the fact that there are biases, prejudices, and stereotypes that everyone has and it can affect who they pull over. Even though you are to put your biases aside in working some people are unable to do that and use their authority as an excuse to explain why they pulled over whomever they pulled over. They are going to urban areas where people tend to be middle to low class, not have a wide

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variety of resources, they should support themselves and sometimes stoop to illegal activity because they have exhausted all other options. I still believe that racial profiling is a thing based off such cases where there are no warning of illegal activity and no reason for the “random” traffic stops. I believe it is a thing for the fact that there are videos of cops saying racist things and admitting that they had no reason to pull them over. This is a thing that cops have been proven to joke about with footage so for that reason I agree that racial profiling is a thing that will not go away and probably not lessen especially due to the backwards spiral we’ve been going down in America.

I believe the primary underlying value is Interconnectedness vs Independence. People look at these racial profiling cases as independent from each other rather than a collective problem for all of society. Van Wormer states how the U.S. values independence over interconnectedness. People tend to think of racial profiling cases as a problem that only effects certain communities or that these incidents are not related to each other. Codependency is the best approach to these kinds of cases because the problem is not only centered around one group. The community has to have a sense of interconnectedness in order to make actual social and legislative progress. One way for the dialogue to open to discuss the problem of racial profiling would be for all those effected by this problem to discuss what needs to be changed. One reason why racial profiling is a problem is because people are not willing to address the underlying problems related to it.

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