
1-7-2000

How Tuberculosis Threatens Supporters and Opponents of Racial Profiling

IBPP Editor
bloomr@erau.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>



Part of the [Law and Race Commons](#), [Law Enforcement and Corrections Commons](#), [Public Health Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2000) "How Tuberculosis Threatens Supporters and Opponents of Racial Profiling," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol8/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.

Title: How Tuberculosis Threatens Supporters and Opponents of Racial Profiling

Author: Editor

Volume: 8

Issue: 1

Date: 2000-01-07

Keywords: Education, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Policy, Racial Profiling, Tuberculosis

Abstract. This article explores peculiarities of logic and reason among supporters and opponents of racial profiling as a tool of developing and implementing public policy.

Opponents of racial profiling as a tool of public policy usually present 5 sets of arguments. First, race has no agreed-upon meaning or means different things to people at different times. Second, there are insurmountable moral and ethical impediments and should be legal ones as well in employing race in public policy. Third, race is not an accurate (or accurate enough) indicator of phenomena coming under the purview of public policy. Fourth, public policy with even a component of race as an indicator and even with acceptable levels of accuracy cannot be implemented without unacceptable mistreatment and abuse. Fifth, there are no adequate feedback mechanisms to monitor the ongoing success or failure of public policy with a race component--even if that policy starts out as successful.

The above arguments primarily have been used to contest the two basic types of racial profiling. The first is in policy matters when race becomes as indicator of threat--e.g., a ticket to very close and very noxious scrutiny by representatives of law enforcement. Of greatest concern has been racial profiling to help prevent political violence (viz., terrorism), so-called non-political, criminal violence (e.g., rape and armed robbery), and other criminal behaviors (viz., illicit drug trafficking and possession with intent to sell).

The second type of racial profiling is in policy matters when race becomes an indicator of opportunity--e.g., a ticket of admission or coupon to the head of the line for education and employment. Of greatest concern have been variants of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity that also disconfirm and provide unequal opportunity to still other racial profiles.

In public discourse within the United States (US), one finds sizeable population segments that support racial profiling for threat but oppose profiling for opportunity. And one finds the converse as well. In fact, one might posit a negative correlation between support for the two types of racial profiling that would qualify as a "strong truth" by the epistemological rituals of the social sciences. Why is this, if the same five sets of arguments about racial profiling are bandied about?

One might suggest that support for or opposition to racial profiling might have less to do with canons of science and other forms of intellectual knowledge and more to do with matters of self-interest, group identification, and even the world beyond reason and the logical. The alternative to this suggestion is that there is something different about the threat versus the opportunity to a polis that warrants different treatment of an indicator like race. However, if this alternative is the case, it is largely absent from current public discourse.

Yet the negative correlation between support for racial profiling in matters of threat and support in matters of opportunity becomes ever more different to support in public health policy. For example, recent figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as described in The New York Times suggest that the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis among foreign-born populations in the US is

many times greater than for native populations. Based on these figures, very intrusive procedures against what may be termed racial and ethnic groups at risk have already been put into operation--with much less of an uproar among opponents of racial profiling.

Why is using some sort of racial indicator so much less of a problem for tuberculosis than terrorism or rape or drug trafficking? All are threats. All involve an invasion of the self with consequences that can be as serious as death. As well, all are impediments to various opportunities for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness--although terrorists, rapists, drug traffickers, and some of the traffickers' clients might strongly disagree. Again, science and intellectual knowledge seem less germane than other factors.

One might conclude that if logic is the study of the principles of reason, and reason is the basis or motive for a decision or action, then support and opposition for racial profiling can be said to be characterized by logic and reason. But all this does is exclude logic and reason from policy deliberation on racial profiling because some other factor besides logic and reason must become the differentiator. And given that public policy is usually conceptualized as employing logic and reason in the service of the polis, one is cast adrift without moorings. (See A National Commission on Terrorism: Fighting Racial Profiling With Racial Profiling. (August 6, 1999). IBPP, 7(5); Hopton, J. (1998). Risk assessment using psychological profiling techniques: An evaluation of possibilities. *British Journal of Social Work*, 28, 247-261; Racism, Racial Profiling, and Espionage: Wen Ho Lee as Victim? (August 20, 1999). IBPP, 7(7); Sachs, S. (January 3, 2000). More screening of immigrants for TB sought. *The New York Times*, p. A1, A21; Sigelman, L. (1997). The public and disadvantage-based affirmative action: An early assessment. *Social Science Quarterly*, 78, 1011-1022; Turvey, B.E. (1999). *Criminal profiling: An introduction to behavioral evidence analysis*. Academic Press, Inc.) (Keywords: Education, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Policy, Racial Profiling, Tuberculosis.)