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The Need for Racial Profiling: Negative Fallout of the Wen Ho Lee Case

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Abstract. This article describes a counterproductive theme within public discourse on racial profiling, as the Wen Ho Lee case has been resolved.

As of this writing, the United States Government (USG) has dropped 58 of 59 counts of a felony indictment against Wen Ho Lee, a nuclear weapons scientist who had worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The indictment had explicitly suggested that Mr. Lee had knowingly engaged in activities that had a drastic, noxious effect on US national security--perhaps, the most negative effect in US history. The indictment implicitly suggested that Mr. Lee had engaged in espionage. Now, the USG has accepted Mr. Lee's guilty plea to a single count of improperly downloading secret information and stated intention to answer other security-related questions related to his behavior.

The upshot of the Lee investigation and resolution is a public discourse vehemently castigating the notion of racial profiling. It is racial profiling--in this case, attributing guilt to an individual based on his socially constructed race--that is behind an embarrassing USG fiasco and the needless suffering of an innocent man. Or so insists the discourse. Yet there is another truth that more likely provides a satisfactory explanation.

Racial profiling--as in exploring various aspects of the human race that may have security relevance in interaction with other aspects, as well as with situational parameters--should be the sine qua non of any personnel security and counterintelligence program. The socially constructed race of "Chinese" can be relevant in that intelligence operatives of the People's Republic of China and of other countries running false-flag operations target this aspect for possible security vulnerabilities. Likewise have intelligence operatives of many countries targeted various races and ethnicities and various social and cultural and political identities. Throwing out the notion of racial profiling is tantamount to throwing out the quest for security.

What seems to have happened in the Wen Ho Lee case is that some USG representatives engaged in a truly amateurish and biased version of racial profiling. Behavioral examples of their efforts seem to have included prematurely closing off the serious consideration of other socially constructed races, individuals who could be characterized by a particular socially constructed race, other aspects of the human race--e.g., desire for money, sexuality, impulsiveness, a sense of entitlement, political affinity, the holding of a grudge--the interaction of various human aspects, and effecting the various procedures of racial profiling within an acceptable legal, social, and cultural context including an ethical and moral calculus.

A significant lesson of the Wen Ho Lee case is not that racial profiling is wrong, but that it needs to be done right. And a final note about doing racial profiling wrongly. Political psychologists might wish to ponder the reality that the vast preponderance of US citizens committing treason against their country in the last quarter century or so have been socially constructed as white, male, heterosexual, and angry at some self-perceived mistreatment. Minority ethnic, racial, and ideological motives have been in a decided minority. In this sense, Mr. Lee broke the profiling mode. (See Bogart, L.M. (1998). The

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relationship of stereotypes about helpers to help-seeking judgments, preferences, and behaviors. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 1264-1275; Dovidio, J. F., Kawakami, K., Johnson, C., Johnson, B., Howard, A. (1997). On the nature of prejudice: Automatic and controlled processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 510-540; Ho, C. P., & Driscoll, D. M. (1998). Great expectations: The negative consequences of falling short. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28, 1743-1759; Johnston, D. (September 12, 2000). Back to square one. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A18; Kawakami, K., Dion, K. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (1999). Implicit stereotyping and prejudice and the primed Stroop task. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 58, 241-250; Sarbin, T. R., Carney, R. M., Eoyang, C. (Eds.). *Citizen espionage: Studies in trust and betrayal*. Westport, CT, USA: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.; Wittenbrink, B., Gist, P. L., & Hilton, J. L. (1997). Structural properties of stereotypic knowledge and their influences on the construal of social situations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 526-543.) (Keywords: Counterintelligence, Espionage, Personnel Security, Wen Ho Lee.)