

EDITORIALS



Ethnic stereotypes lead to airport discrimination

W **Uzma Ahmad**
Editorials Editor

Abdur-Rahim Jackson, a performer for the acclaimed Alvin Ailey dance troupe, was twice the victim of ethnic profiling at Israeli airports earlier this month. Jackson, an African American, was singled out from the rest of his dance company and harassed because of his Muslim name. According to the Associated Press, numerous airport officials humiliated Jackson by forcing him to “dance” for them in order to prove his identity as a performer for the troupe. Jackson was interrogated on the origins of his name, despite his claims that he did not consider himself Muslim.

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that is plaguing checkpoints and airports not only in foreign countries, but on American soil as well. Post 9-11, cultural profiling has escalated to an exceptional height, resulting in the harassment of Muslims at airports, and in Jackson’s case, non-Muslims too. Air transportation has become a constant struggle for members of the Muslim community.

Personally, I cannot remember an instance when I was not stopped to be “randomly” searched because my name had drawn up red flags on an airport database. For some reason, traditional Arab names and clothing are enough justification for labeling Muslims as “possible terrorists.” We quite possibly may be endangering the public, and so it is necessary for us to be held back and taken through a set of entirely pointless procedures to ensure that the other passengers are now in a safe, terrorist-free environment.

As of right now, profiling is illegal with accordance to American law. However, it is extremely common for families to be stereotyped as “terrorists” and labeled a “threat” at American airports.

My family and I are almost always held back to be interrogated on our family background and travel purposes. They confiscate our passports, search us from head to toe, search our baggage

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an extra three to four times, and hold us back for however long they deem suitable. In the meantime, we must learn to ignore the many stares of wonder and fear from nearby passengers.

Not only is the entire experience unnecessary and time wasting, but it is also utterly humiliating and insulting. It is not very enjoyable to be the target of ignorant and confused people, simply because of one’s ethnic appearance or religion.

However, the problem of cultural profiling does not lie only in the impudence of airport officials, but rather in the everyday, average people. Profiling on the institutional level will never cease to exist, if profiling and stereotyping continue on the personal level.

Before the airports have profiled us, people have red flagged us in their own heads. To those with little knowledge of the different communities around them, our clothing and image may produce so many assumptions on who we are and how we act, that it is hard to avoid being affected by such stereotypes.

As observant humans, we all create assumptions on the people

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around us based on little to no information on the actual person. Thus, misconceptions are easily established, which can very well result in a universal stereotype of people, such as the one of the Arab “terrorist.”

For Muslims around the world, cultural profiling has become a common ordeal. For me, personally, I find it my duty to constantly work toward erasing some of the negative stereotypes that have been created towards Muslims. Like the famous words of Mohandas Gandhi, “Be the change that you want to see in the world,” it is necessary that we stop stereotyping and labeling on a personal level if we ever hope of eradicating the stereotyping and harassment deeply grounded in profiling at a global one.

Palin fails to inspire confidence



W **Rexly Penaflores**
Managing Editor

There has never been an election quite like the one coming up in November. In January, the nation might inaugurate an African-American President or the nation’s oldest first-term President. Either way, change will happen.

In the event that the Barack Obama or John McCain is unable to perform his duties in office, the nation would be forced to turn to the Vice President. Thus, the candidates’ choice of running mate must inspire confidence. Delaware Sen. Joe Biden does—Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, I don’t think so.

Let us start with the obvious. Palin clearly was chosen because of her gender rather than her political resume. Having observed Sen. Hillary Clinton’s unsuccessful primary campaign and its bitter aftermath, McCain used the opportunity to entice Clinton’s supporters and other women by picking Palin as his running mate. Although pundits ridiculed the notion that women would vote for anyone without a Y chromosome, it worked. Most of the passionate applause heard during her speech at the Republican National Convention came from women, who apparently were ecstatic at the idea that someone of their gender could be a heartbeat away from the Presidency. Recent polls suggest that white, female voters have defected in droves to support the McCain/Palin ticket.

Whom are they supporting? All we know about Palin is that she was once the mayor of tiny Wasilla, AK (population 7,028) for six years and has spent the last 19 months as that state’s governor. Nevertheless, she had the audacity to bash Obama, saying that she had more experience than he because she was a mayor and he a mere “community organizer,” implying that her job made more impact than his did, conveniently neglecting Obama’s eight years

in the Illinois senate.

Perhaps in response to claims that he is too liberal, McCain balanced the scales with the decidedly right-wing Palin, who:

- is a member of the National Rifle Association;
- opposes disarming nuclear weapons;
- wants the United States to drill for and horde oil for national security and to create the world’s largest privately-owned gas pipeline;
- seeks to deny women the Constitutional right to choose to terminate pregnancy;
- objects to gay rights and providing benefits for same;
- agrees with McCain that America’s presence in Iraq should be continued indefinitely despite the fact that she could not answer ABC anchor Charles Gibson’s question regarding the Bush Doctrine; and
- suggests that the U.S. should intervene militarily in Russia’s skirmishes with former Soviet republics such as Georgia.

Furthermore, Palin talks out of both sides of her mouth. An abstinence advocate, Palin paraded her pregnant, 17-year-old daughter before Republican delegates at the party convention in Minneapolis.

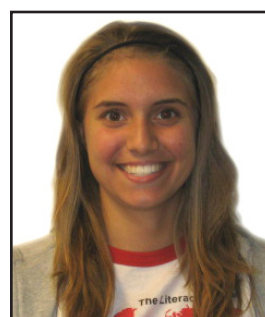
Palin’s most famous flipflop is the infamous “Bridge to Nowhere” debacle. According to the *Boston Herald*, Palin supported building a bridge from the mainland to the island town

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of Ketchikan, AK, after residents were offended that politicians called their city “nowhere.” Soon after, Palin killed the project and used the money to build other projects such as a road that leads to a beach that no one frequents—road to nowhere indeed.

On the other hand Biden has more experience than Palin. He brings 36 years of senatorial experience and has the ideas that can bring the country back after eight years of the Republican Party mismanagement. Palin can only bring us more problems and a longer war. It is time for a change, and the Obama/Biden ticket can bring about the change that this country needs.

Ramadan sacrifice impresses teammate



W **Zoe Ljubic**
Editor in Chief

With newspaper articles daily reporting dissatisfaction with illegal immigration, religious intolerance throughout the world and (as published in a recent Stanford University study) objection to Barack Obama’s candidacy because of race, it appears that many people have a hard time realizing the importance of diversity.

Fortunately, I am privileged to attend a diverse high school with students of a wide variety of ethnicities, who practice different religions and adhere to a variety of beliefs. Diverse populations shape students’ views on life and enable them to become more aware and accepting of one another’s differences. I received the latest in a series of lessons in diversity in an unlikely setting—tennis practice during Ramadan.

Because of its coordination with the phases of the moon, Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, occurs at a different time each year. A month-long observance during which Muslims practice a variety of religious traditions, Ramadan falls in September this year, during the heart of the fall sports season. This can pose challenges for Muslims who compete on West’s athletic teams.

According to www.holidays.net, it was during these 30 days that the Muslim scripture, the *Qur’an*, was revealed to Prophet Muhammad and delivered to the Angel Gabriel. During this month, Muslims ask for forgiveness of past sins, pray for prosperity in the afterlife, seek guidance from God and refrain from evil deeds. In exchange for their struggles, they attain self-purification. A major feature of the month is refraining from eating and drinking from sundown to sunset. Such fasting helps followers sustain patience and self-restraint.

Both qualities were required of one of my teammates last Saturday, an unseasonably hot day. Not only did she cope with the usual challenge of playing tennis fully covered from head

to toe, including wearing *hijab*, the signature Muslim headscarf, she did so in the blazing heat without one sip of water. As a solicitous doubles partner, I offered to sit out with her. However, because of her determination to continue playing, she refused. Her strength of will to continue competing in such conditions while fasting affected me profoundly. It inspired me in ways I couldn’t believe. I was running around in a tee-shirt and shorts, complaining about how scorching the weather was, while my clothing encumbered, parched partner practiced without complaint.

As a devout Catholic, such commitment greatly interests me. Being constantly surrounded by friends, classmates and teammates who practice Islam has given me direct insight on Islam by exposing me to the religion on a more personal level.

The beauty of attending a diverse school is that such heterogeneity extends to all elements of school life, including sports. Being a

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part of a team consisting of Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Jews creates an interesting atmosphere. The conversations and interactions with one another during practice allow me to grasp an understanding of a variety of religions, but Islam intrigues me in particular.

What many people fail to recognize is the amount of determination put into this religion’s commitment to self-sacrifice. A devout, mature Muslim is expected to fast a minimum of 12 hours per day for a month when (s)he hits puberty. Those who think that it is easy are invited to try it. In my opinion, the actions taken by my friends during Ramadan deserve respect and admiration.

I am not here to extol the virtues of Islam at the expense of other faiths, but to praise its followers’ devotion. Despite the struggle, sacrifice and heavy discrimination in the post- 9/11 world, my Muslim friends conduct their daily lives and worship with gratitude, self-discipline, asceticism, determination and sacrifice—valued characteristics that all people, no matter what religion they follow, should emulate.