

## THE WAR WE ARE WINNING, UNFORTUNATELY...

The war on terror is not the only war we are fighting. The other war we are fighting – and, unfortunately, winning – is the war on common sense. Common sense is under attack by well-meaning sincere people who insist that the naked emperor is fully dressed.

Racial profiling is just one of the more obvious examples of absurdity prevailing over common sense. I am sure that most of us have seen the funny make-believe exam listing acts of terrors in the form of a written examination and asking us if middle-aged Italians, Norwegian grandmothers or young Moslem men, committed them. The response was, of course, young Moslem men. The implication was that in security matters it is young Moslem men who should be targeted for special attention rather than Hassidic Jews or Russian ballerinas.

I am sure that Jesse Jackson deeply regrets having said, in a speech on the high crime rate among blacks that when he walks at night in a deserted alley and hears heavy footsteps following him, he is relieved to see that the person behind him is white, not black. I am sure that Jackson still feels the same way but he would be reluctant to say so – he might be accused of racial profiling!

And yes, I do know that not all – or even most - young Moslems are terrorists. I also know that not all young black men are gang members and muggers, that not all mosquitoes carry malaria, that not all pit bulls are vicious and that most cars will stop at a pedestrian crosswalk. But common sense says that I should be apprehensive when confronted by black teenagers in an alley at night, shouldn't pet strange pit bulls, should use a mosquito net in Africa and should look both ways before crossing the street on a crosswalk. I also know that what I have said here is bound to annoy, even anger, those who oppose racial profiling as a racist subterfuge. Some may even quote Martin Luther King's dream that a person should be judged not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character. Surprise! I fully agree with Dr. King whom I admired in life and whose memory I cherish.

I was just 24 years old when my wife and I moved to Los Angeles. She, a highly skilled secretary with experience in New York, was immediately informed that she shouldn't look for work in banks or insurance companies – they weren't hiring Jews. The same prejudice applied to Japanese- Americans who just a few years before had come back to Southern California from American detention camps. They had lost their homes, their farms, their livelihood. They and other Asians were usually referred to as the “yellow” race, a word that is now extinct.

A strange and wonderful thing has happened since then. Jewish-Americans and Japanese-Americans have become white – we can work, live, study and own property just like everyone else. We have stopped being a “minority” without the benefit of affirmative action – we are judged by the content of our character, not by the color of our skin or the slant of our eyes. We are successful and apparently success trumps minority status.

We are, however, the victims of another more insidious and equally absurd discrimination: racial profiling that goes by another name: affirmative action!

The news media have recently exposed a “deplorable” fact about the current freshman class at UCLA – out of 4852 freshmen admitted only 96 were black! Soon letters to the editor and learned editorials deplored, advised, exposed and fumed. The situation, we were told, is regrettable, disgusting, unbearable – the number of black freshmen must be increased at all costs. There was little mention of the fact that 2/3 of the freshmen class was classified as non-white and that 41% of them are Asian-Filipino. In fact, there was no discrimination against minorities as a whole, only against those members of the minorities that failed the test of knowledge and ability – or in the words of Martin Luther King, “the content of their character” – but, absurdly, should have been admitted because of their skin color.

Really? And isn't that racial profiling? Or does it work in one direction only – dark skins, Islamic garb and strange accents are counted positively in college admissions, government contracts and jobs, but may not be noticed by law enforcement.

Several state legislatures have recently introduced bills that would allow the use of common sense in targeting those who are most likely to be security risks. There is little chance of them becoming law – the opposition from human rights organizations and others who refuse to acknowledge the nudity of the emperor is too great. We will continue screening the Norwegian grandmothers in the name of a color- and racially blind society.

Here is a paraphrase on a quote from Shakespeare: “What’s in a name? That which we call affirmative action, by any other name – like racial profiling - would stink as much.”