
The Day America Stood Still

In wake of the final quarter of 2001, the average American was likely concerning themselves with the changing weather, the upcoming school year, and maybe even the rapidly approaching holiday season. However, 2,996 Americans would never spend another holiday season with their families. On September 11th, 2001, our thriving country would collectively stand still. Television sets and radios across the nation would all be tuned in to listen to the tragic news of the terrorist attack in New York City. At approximately 8: 46 AM five terrorists flew the American Airlines Flight 11 into one of the World Trade Center's towers. Soon after the initial attack, the second of the two towers was struck, followed by the attack on the Pentagon. Had passengers of the fourth chosen plane not put their lives on the line, another attack was intended to be made on the White House.

These attacks were organized by Osama Bin Laden, who had recruited other Muslims to complete the his task. These people were the Kamikaze of al-Qaeda. Having been a Muslim organization, the tides of racism turned in the United States. Due to this attack, America became a nation of fear. After 9/11, racial discrimination against Muslims increased, in addition to an explosion of public safety measures in airports. Having been born in 2001, I cannot remember a time pre-9/11. With that being said, I can't remember when the nation I lived in was not considerably "anti-Muslim." In media and politics there is a certain type of discriminatory nature against Muslims, but much of it is kept quiet. For example, imagine yourself sitting on an airplane and a man with a turban and a woman with a hijab sit down across the row from you. It can almost be guaranteed that someone on that plane will become uncomfortable because of the attacks on 9/11. The group of 19 Muslim men made the lives of Muslim Americans change forever.

According to NewAmerica. org, "Across the United States, mosques are vandalized, local government officials denounce Islam, and state legislatures debate anti-Muslim laws." How can this type of racism just "happen"? Prior to 9/11 the rate of anti-Muslim vandalism and abuse was relatively at a moderate state, however, post-9/11 the racists attacks skyrocketed. Whether it is a strange look on an airplane or burning down a mosque, anti-Muslim attacks have risen since September 11th, 2001, and will likely persist. In addition to racism increasing against Muslims in America, the safety precautions for air travel have increased heavily since 9/11. As previously stated, I do not know a life pre-9/11. Therefore, I have never flown on an airplane without the extensive safety precautions that have been enforced. Since the 2001 attacks, the TSA has gone from a minor process, to a long, rigorous check. For example, prior to 2001 you did not need to remove your shoes before getting on a plane, but due to Richard Reid's shoe bomb, everyone must take their shoes off to be sent through screening (Smith 15/16). Additionally, all liquids must be contained at three ounces, and many items such as pen knives are no longer allowed on flights (Smith 15/16). Pre-9/11 airplanes had lightweight bathroom doors and did not require heavy safety training for their TSA members. However, according to McCracken, "The TSA acted to replace lightweight cockpit doors with heavy-lock, bulletproof doors. Pilots may be armed with a gun, but only after training. Some flights are equipped with video cameras, so pilots can monitor cabin activity. Further, the training and screening of TSA employees were made more thorough. More air marshals were hired, and fly on many U. S. flights" (Smith 15/16). It can be argued that all of these changes in the TSA and air travel can

be interpreted by the Symbolic Interactionist theory of sociology. A symbolic interactionist mindset would say that the changes in the TSA.

However, in light of the terrorism and changes the United States has faced since 9/11, there has to be someone who stands against the racial discrimination that Muslim Americans face. How is it that all Muslims are at fault for the attacks that happened in the United States? In the minds of many Americans, Islam is seen as the wrong culture and religion to follow. So why isn't another religion who has been labeled with acts of dishonor seen as evil? Take Catholicism for example. For years the Archdiocese of the Catholic church around the United States has been responsible for covering up the rape of many children, in addition to the discrimination against homosexual beings. These acts are often harsh, cruel, and something a subset terrorist would commit. However, the Catholic church is not nearly as discriminated against as the Islamic religion has. With that being said, the causation of 9/11 is not on the chest of all Muslims, but it is on the hearts of those who committed such terror.

In the long run, the United States will never be the same again. That fateful September day back in 2001 changed the country, and changed international affairs forever. To this day there are consistent fears of air travel in the United States, as well as a persistent racial and religious divide against all of America and Muslim America. However, in the shadows of all of this fear and pain, there needs to be a change. The idea of terrorism is to change the lives of those who had the terror committed against them. Terrorism is supposed to make its victims scared for the rest of their lives. However, wouldn't terror win if we remained scared? This is why I believe that America needs to stand together again, but this time they can't stand still. There needs to be an active change and sense of nationalism in the country. Only then can our country really feel safe again.