July 26, 2012 - Issue 482

PROFILE: White, Male Geek
Nafsi ya Jamii
By Wilson Riles
BC Columnist

If profiling, in the security and criminal justice sense, is an effective method to identify those who are likely to cause injury and death, **where is the profile of the white, male geek**? Some justify the profiling of folks with Arab dress getting on airplanes. And brown folks (Hispanics) are profiled on the highways of Arizona and other places as "illegal aliens" while undocumented folks from Canada have no profile. And young, black males are constantly profiled every day everywhere. Just watch eyes roll when a young black male walks into a corner store.

But after Timothy McVeigh, Andrew Kehoe, Jack Gilbert Graham, David Burke, Martin Bryant, James Oliver Huberty, Charles Witman, Thomas Hamilton, Michael Ryan, Ronald Gene Simmons Sr., Pat Sherill, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, George Banks, Howard Unruh, Mark O. Barton, James Rupert, James Edward Pough, Richard Speck, Anton Probst, Richard Durn, Ray Martin Deford, etc., etc., and NOW James Eagan Holmes…and **still** we have no security profile of the killer white, male geek. That tells me again how much racist BS profiling is.

The urge to "profile" people you do not know when you first meet them is a natural mental response that often does not rise to consciousness. However, racism and all the other "isms" warp that mental process. When this flawed - particularly in the US context - process is institutionalized (when it is frozen into institutional policies and frameworks), the power and weight of flawed institutional pre-judgments come down hard in lethal, discriminatory and unjust ways. Rather than being open to the fact that most often "the book is more

than its cover" and rather than being of open heart and welcoming of those we do not know, agents of these profiling institutions act more like diseased automatons. Let us not be mesmerized by who we are psychologically as humans and how we are shaped by the institutions with which we identify. Despite the protestations of some, who are attempting to understand the whys of the Colorado Theater Shooting, it was not an isolated phenomenon because human beings are not isolated beings; we all are deeply embedded in family, institutions, and community.

Besides the racism on display in discussions about The Shooting, there are deeply buried US social-psychological, political **fractures** that have surfaced and that will be obfuscated by the emotional "flack" being tossed "into the air" by our corporate dominant media in the wake of the event in Aurora. A natural individual and social response to horror will be denial, confusion, segmentation into a conception of mental illness, projection of our own deep horribleness on to an "other," paranoia and conspiracy theory-making, and comforting ritual in words and practices.

We will be strongly attracted to persons or objects to blame other then ourselves. But most of all, we will be blind to the ingrained nature of this tragedy that is deeply rooted in our culture, our politics, and our beings as participants in this Country. We will miss the fact that there is no one set of policies or actions that can cure this. And we will come too late to the ancient wisdom that shows the power of forgiveness of self and forgiveness of "other" as eye opening and mind-opening to eliminate the obscurations of the path to peaceful, prosperous, REAL secure, sustainable life.

One of those serendipitously displayed **cultural fractures** has to do with **the movie** in that theater that night: ***The Dark Knight Rises***. This movie's main character, Bruce Wayne, is a multimillionaire or billionaire. He is supposedly the hero who uses his money and 'cutting edge' technology to equip himself to save the people of his community from consummately evil villains. The source of Bruce Wayne's millions is mostly opaque in the story. Wow! My mind kind of naturally jumps… in an easy way…to that other multimillionaire **in the news** who is hiding his money in mechanism out-of-sight overseas: Mitt Romney. It is pretty obvious that he also thinks of himself as kind of a hero "Bruce Wayne."

Did the shooting obscure this comparison from most of us or expose it? Can we find the forgiveness of self to dampen all of our "survivor's

remorse?" Guilt is a most powerful mentally debilitating emotion. Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper epitomized the usual shallow response when he said, what Holmes did "…may not have been political terrorism, but it was the act of a deranged, demonic person." Someone who spends months planning such an act has an ideology. Can we forgive the perpetrator enough to see ourselves in him - he is also human - rather than project what within ourselves we refuse to project… on to him… to make ourselves feel more pure and more righteous. As individuals and as a country we have done some pretty horrendous things. Our political, imperialistic justifications do not make our acts any less horrible. We need to own up to them rather than project them on to others. That is what I think James Eagan Holmes did…project his inner demons out on to others and then physically killed those demons. That is a psycho-social disease of our time to which we are all subject.

The drama of Batman and most modern comic books and legendary stories does this dynamic for some of us. This transference of our processes into the drama, up on the screen, makes even more poignant the juxtaposition of Bruce Wayne to Mitt Romney. The real multimillionaire is part of the financial industry that crashed the economy, causing hardship and (indirectly) death to innocent people. He was part of the company, Bain Capital, which, both when Romney was there and afterward, fired lots of people and ruined their dreams and lives. Who and where is the multimillionaire hero in real life?

Guns are devastating our community every damned day. We constantly project our fears and our inner demons out onto others - in racists, sexist, homophobic, and other ways. And often we shoot, cut, oppress, and suppress those others onto whom we project. We do not see them as human or we see them as irredeemably evil, mentally ill, or fundamentally different because of what we have taken out of ourselves and put on them. To some degree, we are all James Eagan Holmes. That is why profiles do not work.

For Mr. Riles, the following is an explanation of the meaning of the Swahili term "Nafsi ya Jamii":

> *Nafsi ya Jamii is the Swahili phrase that translates in English to "The Soul Community". Real community is the next phase in the process of seeking individual justice through social change. To be guided by the words of Howard Thurman: "Don't ask what the world needs; ask what makes you come alive, and go do that. What the world needs is people who have come alive."*

Maintain a Seven Generations perspective in all that is done; honoring the generations who've come before and mindful that our actions will have an impact for the generations who come after. Additionally, recognize that all of us are cultural beings; we include deep cultural understanding and experience in all that is done.

BlackCommentator.com *Columnist, Wilson Riles, is a former Oakland, CA City Council Member. Click* [here](#) *to contact Mr. Riles.*

bc