

THE ANTI-MUSLIM HYSTERIA: SHAMEFUL U.S. HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

By: Antonio C. Cabral

One of the darkest and most shameful periods in the history of the US may be repeating itself. This time it will be innocent Muslim families in particular and all persons of Arab appearance who will be the victims of hysterical and unjustified persecution within the US.

History shows how easy it is for the U.S. civil society to be incited into acting irrationally against innocent men, women and children maligned unjustly. Let's look at one specific example in U.S. history:

From 1942 to 1947 the U.S. government ran internment camps throughout the country to imprison innocent civilians of German, Italian and Japanese descent. The majority of those prisoners were Japanese U.S. citizens by birth or legal immigrants but their legal status didn't save them from being victimized by the anti-Japanese hysteria after Japan's air force bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Soon after Pearl Harbor, Japanese families were targets of insults and physical attacks throughout the country and the FBI began making a list of U.S. citizens and immigrants of foreign nationalities called the Custodial Detention Index (CDI) using data from the US Census. Then, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the FBI and police departments to arrest all Japanese living anywhere in the U.S. and transport them by train to internment camps. The FBI used that CDI to begin rounding up Japanese residents while the U.S. State Department pressured Latin American countries to arrest their Japanese population and deport them to the U.S. to be imprisoned. According to the National Archives Library, twelve governments obeyed and shipped hundreds of their citizens of Japanese ancestry to the U.S.

To implement EO 9066, internment camps were built throughout the country. Three of them were in Texas cities: Seagoville, Kenedy and Crystal City. The largest camp was in Crystal City, located 116 miles southwest of San Antonio and it was the only camp that held entire Japanese families.

Ironically, the camp had been a labor camp used by Mexican migratory farm workers. In the fall of 1942 the U.S. Department Immigration Service and the Department of Justice took over the camp and expelled the Mexican farm workers and by March 1943 the first Japanese prisoners began arriving in trains under heavy military guard

According to records of the Texas State Historical Commission, by December 23, 1944, there were already 3,374 Japanese families held at the Crystal City internment camp and were

there until the camp closed November 1, 1947.

Today, the same type of racist and unfounded hysteria is spreading across the U.S. This time the targets are thousands of U.S. Muslim families in danger of suffering the same persecution that the Japanese suffered in the 1940s. The horrible San Bernardino massacre is being used by grandstanding politicians of both parties, by lobbyists for war-profiteering corporations and by racist groups that want to use the San Bernardino killings to intensify their persecution of immigrant families of color. The ideologues fanning the flames of that hysteria against "terrorists who want to harm our people" conveniently ignore several facts of recent history:

The U.S. invasions, bombings and total destructions of the social fibers in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle

East created the inhuman conditions that not only have pushed millions of families to flee their country but have also served to radicalize peaceful people who witnessed the death of relatives and friends and the destruction of their neighborhood by U.S. bombs and missiles. All that military adventurism by the U.S. in the Middle East not only implanted deep anger among ordinary people but also opened the doors so that ISIS and other criminal gangs could take control of those countries.

As for the argument to justify persecution of U.S. Muslims and other Middle Eastern families in general in order to "protect ourselves from terrorists," allow me to remind the reader of just a few names and events:

There are many other examples of U.S. mass killings by what the corporate media called homegrown "shooters." Ironically, none of those mass murderers were called terrorists. Only the couple of Middle Eastern origins (one born in Chicago) who perpetrated the San Bernardino killings are called "terrorists."

Predictably, the myopic hysteria against Muslims is also being used to justify more wars. The Pentagon is preparing to send more U.S. soldiers to expand the wars in the Middle East. That will please the corporations that profit from wars and, as many clear-headed U.S. analysts correctly argue, it will also please ISIS because U.S. 'boots on the ground' will help it recruit more fighters from around the world to fight 'the invaders.'

History teaches us important lessons that we must remember to avoid repeating serious mistakes particularly now with Muslim-phobia dragging us to the dark side and with the endless and counterproductive wars against people in the Middle East.

Bob Marley's advice is relevant again, "Don't forget your history....."

Bio: Antonio C. Cabral is a San Antonio, Texas, writer. His essays are published in the U.S. and in Mexico.

- 09.10.13** - Aaron Alexis murdered 12 & injured 3 in Washington, DC.
- 07.20.12** - James Holmes murdered 12 & injured 58 in Aurora, CO.
- 12.14.12** - Adam Lanza murdered 27 & injured 1 in Newton, Connecticut.
- 04.04.99** - Eric Harris & Dylan Klebold murdered 13 & injured 24 in Columbine, CO.
- 04.19.95** - Timothy McVeigh murdered 168 & injured 600 in Oklahoma City, OK.
- 10.16.92** - George Hennard murdered 22 & injured 20 in Killeen, TX.