

Opinion Editorials

To support your congressional visit, we recommend a targeted media outreach plan, focusing on smaller local papers. Here are a few steps to help get your article printed:

- Identify editors of the local, community and ethnic papers.
- Send an e-mail to all the editors introducing yourself and the issue in 2 short paragraphs.
- Ask the editor to respond if they are interested in publishing your op-ed.
- Include the op-ed in the body of the e-mail.
- Follow up by phone. Follow-up again. And follow up a third time. Remember, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Remember to be extremely pleasant and concise in your follow up e-mail or call.

Op-eds

Op-eds are editorial type articles written by guest columnist or non-staff writers, like you, and usually appear on the page opposite a newspaper's editorial page. The editorial page is traditionally reserved for the opinions of the editors, editorial board, or the publisher.

This is the forum that gives a guest writer (you) the largest platform to argue an issue. An op-ed should be between 600 and 800 words. Below are a few guidelines and hints to help you get your op-ed published.

- **Timeliness and newsworthiness**
Pegging your op-ed to a hot news item gives an op-ed editor incentive to publish the article.
- **Grab your readers**
You have 3-4 sentences to grab your reader's attention. The first paragraph should be short and catchy or captivating.
- **Be clear and concise**
You have a very limited space to get a point across. Use small words and verbs. Write in the active voice. Avoid slang, clichés, academic language, and overused expressions. Choose the top three arguments to support your thesis.
- **Strength of argument (supporting facts)**
Use reliable sources to support your argument. If a fact can be challenged, footnote your sources; it will put the editor at ease. Papers hate to publish retractions; it makes them look bad.
- **Originality**
Readers don't want to re-read the same articles, so editors are less likely to publish opinions covered in the editorial page or by regular columnists.
- **Use personal experiences and the first-person**
Using a personal story adds to the originality of the piece. As long as it explains or supports your point and is not superfluous, it will set your op-ed apart.
- **Have a strong closing**

The closing paragraph should be as strong as the opening in order to drive the point home. This will leave a lasting impression.

Op-ed Example

End racial profiling now

Baltimore Sun – December 7, 2009

By Benjamin Todd Jealous and Margaret Huang.

The End Racial Profiling Act (ERPA) will soon be reintroduced by Rep. John Conyers, Democrat of Michigan, and Sen. Russ Feingold, Democrat of Wisconsin. Numerous incidents throughout American history have taught us that racial profiling not only fails as a law enforcement tool but ultimately makes us all less safe. Passage of ERPA would be an important step toward ending racial profiling.

Over a century ago, Leon Czolgosz walked up to President William McKinley with a concealed weapon and shot him. The Secret Service agent assigned to search the president's visitors was focused on a "dark complexioned man" in line behind Czolgosz. Ironically, the same man whose appearance made the agent suspicious - Jim Parker, an African-American former constable - saved President McKinley from a third bullet.

In 1995, after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh, the white male assailant, fled while law enforcement officers looked for "Arab terrorists" whom they thought responsible.

Racial profiling does not always target minorities. In 2002, during the sniper attacks that terrorized Washington-area residents for months, police conducted surveillance searching for a disaffected white man with an accomplice, driving a white van. During that time, the actual culprits - an African-American man and boy who fit many of the characteristics of a serial killer, except that they were black - came into contact with police at least 10 times without being apprehended. How many lives would have been saved had race not been a part of the profile?

As airport security agents focused on people of Middle Eastern descent following the Sept. 11 attacks, Nathaniel Heatwole, a white college student, was able to smuggle knives, box cutters, bleach and other items onto at least six planes from February to September 2003. He then sent numerous e-mails to the Transportation Security Administration notifying them of his actions. It took the TSA more than a month to find the hidden items.

Just as history has shown that using race as a proxy for criminality is bad policy, history also shows that focusing on behavior over race is smart policy. When law enforcement officers eliminate race as a factor and instead rely on behavior, they catch more people who break the law. In the late 1990s, as a response to discrimination lawsuits, the U.S. Customs Service eliminated the use of race in deciding which individuals to stop and search for illegal contraband and instead began focusing on suspect behavior. Studies showed that this shift to "color-blind profiling techniques" increased the rate of productive searches (those leading to the discovery of illegal contraband or activity) by more than 300 percent.

Other examples in our nation's history demonstrate that we can be smart and safe in our efforts to find people who break the law, as opposed to focusing on people's race, gender or national origin. In the 1970s, the Secret Service relied on a presidential assassin profile that excluded females. After Sara Jane Moore took a shot at President Gerald Ford, the gender limitation was removed from this profile, a move

that potentially saved President George H.W. Bush in 1992 when a young woman was arrested for threatening to kill him after bringing a rifle to a rally at which he was scheduled to speak.

Some enlightened members of Congress analyzed the culmination of evidence proving the ineffectiveness of racial profiling and introduced a bill that would ban racial profiling by federal, state and local law enforcement. The ERPA was first introduced in 2001 and gained bipartisan support. Unfortunately, after Sept. 11, misplaced fear stemmed the momentum for ERPA, and the U.S. government embarked on an era of intense profiling, rounding up more than 1,200 Arab, South Asian and Muslim men and holding them without charges.

Such action did not make us safer. In fact, the mass roundup within the United States after Sept. 11 never apprehended anyone subsequently officially linked to the attacks. An inspector general's report later revealed that many of the detainees had been blocked from contacting attorneys and that some of them had been beaten or otherwise physically abused by guards in federal prisons.

Unfortunately, the scope of racial profiling is expanding. As the responsibility for enforcing immigration laws and finding undocumented immigrants has been increasingly delegated to state and local police, evidence of increased racial profiling is emerging across the country.

President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric H. Holder have stated that ending racial profiling is a "priority." The more than 40 members of Congress planning to reintroduce the ERPA agree.

It's time to face the truth: Racial profiling is a violation of our constitutional and human rights, and it distracts the attention of law enforcement from real suspects, which puts all of us at risk. The ERPA should be passed this year, ensuring greater safety for all of our communities.

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