

Introduction

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September 11, 2001 was not the first time there was a massive attack on the United States. The first was of course December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor. While in some ways the immediate reactions to the two events were very different, in others, there were troubling similarities.

After Pearl Harbor and the United States' subsequent declaration of war on Japan, the government decided that the safety of the nation required the

for the substantial amount of property they lost.³ Those actions amounted to a recognition that the government of the United States had stigmatized an entire people, and that this was an egregious wrong.

Contrast the events of 1942 with the reaction to the terrorism of September 11, 2001. President George W. Bush went to a major service at the National Cathedral, which was opened by a Muslim cleric. Congress included in the Patriot Act of 2001, the “anti-terrorism” law, a finding that Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans are as American as anyone else.⁴ The difference between 1942 and 2001 was marked.

And yet, one might wonder at the perceived necessity for the congressional finding. Its conclusions ought to be so obvious that its inclusion in the Patriot Act suggests two things. One, happily, is that we are very much aware of the Japanese-American experience and want not to repeat it. From that point of view, Congress’ attempt to educate the population about stereotyping is welcome. The second and equally clear implication, however, is that the impetus to racism that led to the stereotyping of Japanese-Americans has not vanished from our shores.

Two weeks after September 11th the media was carrying reports of more than two hundred incidents of verbal and physical violence a day against Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans. By the time of the Woodrow Wilson Center’s conference on American Arabs, held on November 1, 2001, over one thousand people had been rounded up by the federal government and were still in prison, although they had not been charged with any crime. They were

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