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*"This Above All... To Thine Own  
Self Be True. And it must follow, as  
the night the day, thou canst not  
then be false to any man."  
• Shakespeare / Hamlet / I / III*



Why aren't we interning Islamic-Americans like we did Japanese Americans during World War II?

The Japanese killed 3,435 military and civilian people at Pearl Harbor. Islamic extremists killed over 6,000 in New York. The Japanese crippled our Pacific Fleet; the Muslims paralyzed the entire country.

By any measure harmed America more than the Japanese. Yet we have not confiscated property or locked up people of Middle-Eastern descent.

Why? What changed?

We did. As our consciousness of human dignity expanded, our capacity for violating civil rights contracted.

In 1942, African-Americans were subjected to segregation, lawful discrimination, and organized, state-sponsored violence. They could not eat or sleep in "white" restaurants and hotels and could vote only if they overcame polling obstacles that weren't placed on whites.

In 1942, married women could not be issued credit in their own name. They could not get a bank loan without a male co-signer. The Help Wanted sections of newspapers were filled with pages and pages of jobs for which women could not even apply.

In 1942, Jews were not allowed to buy homes in certain neighborhoods, were not accepted at many schools, were not hired by most big companies, and could not practice medicine at numerous medical facilities. A 1939 public opinion poll indicated that 53% of people thought Jews should be excluded and segregated.

## Slouching Through Gomorrah

# Expressions

## Why Don't We Intern Islamic-Americans?



"...and our flag was still there"

[www.SteveWalker.com](http://www.SteveWalker.com)

In 1942, vice squads constantly raided gay bars and the American Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality a mental illness.

Given the state of America's civil rights consciousness in 1942, it just wasn't that big of a leap for us to confiscate property and incarcerate U.S. citizens because of their Japanese ancestry.

Thankfully, given the state of America's civil rights consciousness in 2001, it would be impossible for us to do it.

Winning may build character but losing reveals it. America lost big on September 11 and what we revealed to ourselves was enough to make flag-wavers out of flag-burners.

In 1942, the President of the United States signed an executive order to essentially jail people who shared the same ethnicity of our attackers.

In 2001, the President of the United States visited a mosque and prayed with people who shared the same ethnicity of our attackers.

Today we are doing with our collective conscience what we did centuries ago with our land—we're settling it, taming it, civilizing it.

The Homestead Act allowed anyone to file for a quarter section of free land (160 acres). The land was yours at the end of five years if you had built a house on it, dug a well, plowed 10 acres, fenced a specified amount and actually lived there.

Over the years, the lawlessness of the frontier was transformed into a civilized rule of reason, fairness and justice.

America has run out of land but not ideas. Now the

frontiers that we homestead are in our minds, not at our feet. It's in our collective consciousness that we've been building houses, digging wells, and plowing fields. We've done it by passing laws, opening minds and moving hearts.

That's why we don't intern Islamic-Americans today. Because that piece of our lawless frontier consciousness that interned Japanese-Americans got homesteaded.

Tragedies born of hate and malice tend to propel us further into fairness. But nothing will propel our cause for equality like the tragedy in New York.

Even the hideousness of Matthew Shepard's death kept Straight America at a semi-comfortable distance. There was still an Us/Them mentality to the revulsion ("Isn't it horrible for *them*, gay men, to be so brutalized").

But this time, the majority — straight white people — suffered as much as any minority has ever suffered from the violence of de-humanization.

As we stagger up from our grief and rebuild our lives there will be a continuing evolution of human rights. It will be harder for the majority to fight bills that advance the cause of fairness like the Employment Non-discrimination Act or hate crimes legislation.

It will be harder for the majority to deny justice and equality to *any* minority. Because for the first time ever, straight whites took a direct hit from hate.

It is one thing to witness unspeakable violence; it's another thing to be the target of it. Today we are all victims of an unspeakable hate crime. We were all equal in the eyes of the hijackers. If we come out of this nightmare intact, we will all be equal in the eyes of each other.

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### The Express Stylebook Policy

For the sake of readable newswriting, the word "gay" in *The Express* should, when relevant, be interpreted to be inclusive of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, transgendered people, two-spirited people, intersexed people, men-who-have-sex-with-men, women-who-have-sex-with-women, queers, homosexuals, sexual minorities, and people who are unsure of their sexual orientation, but think they might be gay. Here is an example: "Toronto's gay-pride parade is bigger than Vancouver's."



[www.adamandandy.com](http://www.adamandandy.com)