Can We Trust The Media? (430 WORDS)

People believe in the media. It is considered a way to obtain truthful information that is unbiased and unprejudiced. The media shapes political, social and even moral viewpoints. So, it is unfortunate that the media is often very unfair in presenting different religions and different cultures, especially those from the Middle East.

Have you ever heard the terms “Arab Terrorist,”“Islam versus The West,” or the ever-popular “Islamic Fundamentalist?” I bet you can think of many more examples of this appearing in the media, both in print and on television.

Let’s clear up some of the misconceptions that the media often instills in many people about Muslims and Arabs. Often the media classifies terrorists as ‘Muslims’ before it even mentions the crimes that have been committed. This was made obvious in the World Trade Centre bombing in New York City on September 11, 2001 – known as the 911 attack. I think I heard the names ‘Muslim,’ ‘Arab,’ ‘Islamic Fundamentalist,’ and ‘Arab Terrorist’ more often than I heard the word ‘crime’ mentioned.

During the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing of a government building, when 168 people were killed, the media reported (from so-called reliable sources) that the bombing was most likely committed by Muslin or Arab fundamentalists even before preliminary investigations were completed. This caused much prejudice across the United States. Many mosques (Islamic places of worship) were destroyed and many Arab people across American were threatened. Later it was discovered that the men who did the bombing weren’t Muslims at all or even from the Middle East, but were part of an American organization planning to overthrow the American government. What does being Muslim or Arab have to do with committing terrible crimes? Why does the media make it seem that Arabs and Muslims have a connection to crime or injustice? In fact, most of the one billion Muslims worldwide are not even Arabs, many live on the African continent, which is another point the media fails to make clear. Is this responsible journalism?

In addition, the term, “fundamentalism” is used incorrectly. A religious fundamentalist is one who believes in the fundamental, basic, orthodox principles of their religion So why are people who are crazy enough to commit terrible crimes such as bombings or killings considered “religious fundamentalists” when they are actually doing the opposite of what their religion teaches and guides them to do? Labelling killers or terrorists as religious fundamentalists implies that their very religion promotes violent hate and injustice. This is untrue but the media continues to connect violence with religious fundamentalism.

As a Muslim, a follower of Islam, and as a human being, I am disheartened and upset that the media does such a poor job providing unbiased news. It has to stop.

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