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## Review of "My Name is Khan"

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*My Name is Khan*, introduces us to a global, multicultural theme from the perspective of an innocent Muslim in the horror of the post-9/11 United States. Victimized for being autistic in his native India, Rizvan Khan also faces the perennial violence and hate generated by the anti-Muslim pogroms there. While an impressionable child, his mother, Razia Khan, teaches him a very profound ethical lesson - that irrespective of caste, class, race, religion, or ethnicity, there are only two kinds of people - good ones who do good deeds, and bad ones who do bad deeds.

After immigrating to the United States, Rizvan works as a salesman for his brother Zakir Khan's herbal beauty products company. Due to his strong work ethic, he is able to enjoy the benefits of the American Dream. Despite opposition from his brother, he marries a Hindu divorcee, Mandira, who has a 6-year old son, Sameer, and becomes part of her family. They work hard, lead a happy life, and are well integrated into a multicultural community.

After the tragic events of 9/11 Rizvan's whole world turns upside down. Due to prejudice, Mandira's customers abandon her beauty salon and she is forced to close and seek work elsewhere. 9/11 marks a watershed moment concerning the rights of Muslims in the US. The ignorance, fear, racism, and hysteria generated by the media lead to stereotyping, demonization, stigmatization, and brutal attacks against Muslims. The film depicts the cruel, inhumane, and racist character of American society, where Muslims are considered less than human and their rights trampled upon with impunity, based on unsubstantiated and vague suspicions. Due process and equal protection rights are disregarded due to the hysteria generated by terrorism. We see events get even uglier when Sameer, Mandira's son, is killed by four racist bullies at his school. Mandira is beside herself with grief and blames Rizvan and his Muslim-ness for all their woes. She asks Rizvan to leave and only return when he is able to tell the President of the United States that he is not a terrorist. Accordingly, Rizvan leaves San Francisco in search of the President to deliver his message.

This movie depicts the gross violations of the civil/human rights experienced by the Muslim community in the US, which arose from prejudice, collective blame, and hate incited against Muslims. While attempting to meet President Bush, Rizvan is arrested for suspicion of being a terrorist and is placed in solitary confinement, in flagrant violation of his constitutional rights. He is strip/cavity searched and dehumanized by overzealous law enforcement agents and classified as a dangerous terrorist. In time, due to the advocacy of Rizvan's friends, the authorities realize they have made a mistake and release him.

In spite of these difficult odds, Rizvan is able to maintain his dignity, demanding love and respect for all human beings. He also acts on these resolute beliefs by showing that love eventually triumphs over hate. For example, after parting from his wife and being down on his luck, he is cared for by a poor

African American family (Mamma Jenny & Funny Hair Joel) in Wilhelmina, Georgia. When a hurricane hits Wilhelmina, Rizvan volunteers to help his friends and the poor residents of this storm ravaged town. Due to his love and care, he is able to organize a rescue effort to save his friends.

Though unsuccessful in delivering his message to President George Bush, Rizvan is finally able to deliver it to Barrack Obama, the first African-American President of the United States: "*My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist.*"

On the whole this film is quite effective in portraying the plight of the Muslim community after 9/11, and would be appropriate for use in introductory courses on terrorism, race and ethnicity, sociology, and criminology. The dominant stereotypical narratives blame Islam and all Muslims for terrorism. The enhanced power of the state, without proper checks, is shown to lead to gross violations of the rights of the Muslim community. The film is very effective in showing that love, tolerance, and patience can overcome the hate, fear, and ignorance to which a society succumbs, and acts as an effective antidote to prejudice.