

## Boulder Daily Camera

# Boston Marathon and the lessons of our perceptions

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The awful tragedy at the Boston Marathon offers lessons of just about every kind. Here is one about how automatic some of our attitudes are.

When we pair two concepts -- Boston marathon and immigrant, what do you think of?

Chances are, your thoughts go immediately to the fact that the two alleged perpetrators of this horror were immigrants. That thought certainly occurred to Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa who was quoted as saying, "While we don't yet know the immigration status of people who have terrorized the communities in Massachusetts, when we find out, it will help shed light on the weaknesses of our [immigration] system."

A similar thought occurred to U.S. Rep. Peter T. King of New York who "urged authorities to beef up their surveillance of Muslims in the U. S. following Friday night's arrest of bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev."

Nor was the thought far from the mind of a man in Malden, MA who went up to a woman -- a 26-year-old physician who wears a traditional hijab and who was pushing her baby in a stroller -- and "punched her hard in the shoulder and screamed curses inches from her face" as he accused her of being a terrorist.

It is less likely that when people hear the pairing of Boston Marathon and immigrant that they will think of Lu Lingzi, a 23-year-old woman from China who was in the U. S. as a student guest studying finance at Boston University. She was killed by one of the bombs exploded at the Boston Marathon.

It is also unlikely that they will think of the young Saudi male -- another student at a Boston university -- who was tackled by a civilian as he was running from the scene of the bombing. The Saudi male had serious burns that required hospitalization, but the civilian thought that he "was acting suspiciously." After questioning him and his roommates and searching his apartment, the police decided that the Saudi man posed no threat.

It is also less likely that people will immediately think of Carlos Arredondo, an immigrant from Costa Rica who had already lost two sons -- one a 20-year-old who died during his second deployment to Iraq and another who committed suicide. As soon as the bombs went off at the Boston Marathon, Arredondo rushed to help the injured. He said to one man -- Jeff Bauman who lost both his legs in the blast -- "My name's Carlos, you're

going to be OK, help is on the way." And so it was, as Carlos used a near-by sweater to stem the bleeding from Jeff Bauman's legs.

The tragedy in Boston offers us all many lessons. What did you immediately think of with the pairing, Boston Marathon and immigrant?