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Antagonization of the Persian family in *Crash*

The 2004 film *Crash* features an array of characters and families being subjected to discrimination on the basis of preconceived notions of their individual cultural backgrounds. One of these families is a Persian family that operates a local store in Los Angeles. The primary conflict that this family faces is the ransacking of their store after a lock on the store’s backdoor fails to be correctly repaired. The lock on this store was apparently correctly installed by the lock technician Daniel. However, after Daniel informed Farhad that the root of the problem is that the door is faulty and an argument breaks out, the door is left unrepaired. The argument that broke out was moot, as Daniel stated that he is not qualified to repair the door, but Farhad does not seem to understand and continues to assert that Daniel must complete the repairs. This shows that Farhad has sparse English skills and is supported by the fact that he and his wife speak as much dialogue in their native language as they do in English.

This native language is also an important attribute concerning the circumstance of this family and serves as foundation for an irony about the discrimination that the family faces well before it is established that they are Persian. When the store is looted and vandalized, graffiti is visible on the walls of the building, spelling out slurs against Arabs. Additionally, the gun store owner makes discriminatory statements to Farhad concerning his Arab background. However, a trained ear could discern very early on in the countenance of events concerning this family that the language spoken between them is Farsi, not Arabic. Upon notice of this, the viewer is quickly made alerted of the detail that the family’s origins are Persian, not Arab.

The common stereotypes held against this family are more closely associated with their religion than their geographical specificities of their ethnic genesis. Generally, those who are ignorant of the cultural disparity between Persia and Arabia label members of both groups simply as Muslim, even if they do not follow that religion specifically. In fact, it is never stated in the movie that Farhad and his family are Muslim, but it is very easy to assume that due to the fact that the family comes from a region where the primary religion is Islam, which the viewer can easily and mistakenly assume be supported by the headwear sported by Farhad’s wife. This is an intentional misconception inserted into the description of this family, as it is widely assumed that only Islamic women wear such garments. However, it is very common for Jewish and Christian women in the Middle East, Persia, and Turkey; even before the Islamic Revolution; to also cover with a headscarf. All of these details masterfully bait the viewer into jumping to the conclusion that Farhad’s family are specifically Arab Muslims. In reality, they are definitely not Arab, and there is no indication that the family is Muslim – only the viewer’s prejudice.