

January 30, 2017

Dear UCLA Law Community,

As you have likely already seen, earlier today our chancellor and executive vice chancellor sent out the attached message about President Trump's executive order imposing a 90-day ban on all refugee, immigrant and nonimmigrant entry from seven majority-Muslim countries. I share their grave disappointment and concern about both the implementation of this executive order and about the policy itself.

In the wake of this executive order, I want to ensure the safety and protection of any students from the targeted countries who are in our community. Although here at the law school we have many students whose families hail from these seven countries (and a number who were born there themselves), we are still working to determine if any of our law students are current citizens of one of these nations. I would appreciate very much if any such students would contact me or Assistant Dean Emily Scivoletto, so that we can provide whatever help and support we can.

My concern also extends to our community as a whole. As dean of UCLA Law School, I often tell potential students that Los Angeles is a place where the 21st century is unfolding. People from every corner of the world call our city home, and I believe this extraordinary diversity is one of our core assets.

We are part of a great public university in the global crossroads of Los Angeles, and our connections to the world are a source of strength and new ideas. They are also absolutely central to our core academic and educational mission. Right now there are more questions than answers about this executive order, its reach, and its legality. But to so many ears, my own included, this order sounds in the register of both isolationism and anti-Muslim sentiment. Both of these are anathema to our core values as a university devoted to non-discrimination, the dissemination of knowledge, and tolerance for difference.

To the many Muslim students, staff, and faculty in our community: I recognize that this executive order and the politics surrounding it are a source of tremendous anxiety and unease. Religious freedom is a bedrock value of this nation, and our commitment to diversity is fundamental to this institution. I want you to know that I, and the law school, will do whatever is in our power to support this pluralist vision.

Back in 1938, FDR told the Daughters of the American Revolution, "Remember, remember always that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists."

Yes, indeed. And we all have our stories. My great-grandparents left poverty and pogroms in Eastern Europe and somehow found their way to Kansas City, Missouri, around the turn of the century, and built their lives and found acceptance as Midwestern Jews. My husband's mother came into this world as a Jew in Italy in 1938. Just as she was born, her father lost his job because of his religion. He fled to England to escape Italy's growing anti-Semitism, only to be declared there an enemy alien because he was Italian. He and his family made it to America as refugees because of the kindness of strangers.

I know each of you, and your families, have your own stories. Share them with one another, and celebrate the remarkable polyglot story that is America.

I certainly recognize that reasonable people have highly varying ideas about what our immigration laws should look like, and I further recognize the important national security dimensions linked to immigration policies. But

I believe two aspects of the last few days transcend partisanship and remind us of the importance of our profession.

First, though the details remain murky, it appears that this executive order may not have received the careful review from lawyers that would typically be expected from the Office of Legal Counsel in the Justice Department to the National Security Council to the State Department. Such scrutiny by lawyers plays a critical role in analyzing problems and ‘issue spotting,’ that skill law students work so hard to hone from the first semester onwards. Suffice it to say that, especially around difficult issues, the absence of such scrutiny shows.

Second, it is hard not to notice the important role lawyers and judges have played over the last couple of days. As soon as the executive order went into effect, numerous lawyers hurried to both airports and courtrooms across the nation to try to prevent deportations of individuals in transit with visas and green cards – including, in that very first wave of lawyers here at LAX, our own recent graduate, Jordan Cummings ’14, now working at Public Counsel, among many others, including many UCLA Law students. These lawyers and future lawyers stood up for what they believed in, and used the law and their training to support their arguments – and judges (including UCLA graduate Dolly Gee, U.S. District Court Judge for the Central District) listened. I know that a great many students, staff, faculty, and alums have been putting their time, energy and prodigious talents into these and related efforts.

In this difficult time, our dedication to the law, to its fair and faithful execution, and to its use as a tool in the service of our core beliefs, is something that we can share, develop and remain proud of. I believe that the more we are devoted to those ends, the stronger we can be, both as individuals and as an institution.

Yours,



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