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Another Perspective: Trump travel ban problematic

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There have been many responses from higher education to President Trump's original executive order limiting visas for refugees and citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries.



With the release of the revised executive order on March 6, the scope of the "travel ban" has narrowed. But the new order remains problematic in light of the aims it intends to achieve and it is our responsibility as educators to call this out.

I speak on behalf of international education at the secondary level and the continued tradition of American education as the great hope and equalizer not only for citizens of the United States, but for citizens of the world.

This executive order cuts at the heart of our tremendous capacity to shape young people for the rest of their lives, especially in the direction of mutual understanding that honors difference even as it lays claim to our shared humanity.

At the United States campus of the United World College in Montezuma, as well as on our 16 sister campuses around the world, we witness every day the power of relationships formed by students from different countries.

When students from Palestine and Israel work on homework together, or students from Iran, Iraq, and the United States plan service projects, they form bonds that counter long-standing historical, cultural, religious and political barriers.

They learn that they have more in common than they thought.

Because they are young, their prejudices are less ingrained. We can learn from them, and we should stand up to make sure nothing gets in the way of their coming together.

The parts of the world that President Trump's executive order target are the very parts of the world that need more engagement with America and American students. A recent program evaluation for a Department of State exchange program with students from Muslim-majority countries showed that 94 percent of participants had a more positive impression of the United States afterward.

Further, the six countries identified in the executive order are places where relationships between people play an outsized role in forward progress. For the United States to be safer, we need deeper, stronger relationships. Increased barriers to peaceful exchange will not fulfill the objective of greater security.

The United World College was founded in response to the Cold War and on the principle that relationships forged between young people from diverse cultures will make the world safer.

We affirm this vision for ourselves and for the world; we are compelled to speak out against policies that make it more difficult to build positive relationships among young people of different cultures and creeds.

Education, carried out face to face and shoulder to shoulder, is the most effective antidote to extremism of all kinds. Reasonable people may disagree on how best to achieve national security, but barriers to mutual understanding will never qualify as a viable alternative.

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