

AAPCSW RESPONSE TO THE UNFOLDING EXECUTIVE ORDER - IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL BAN

February 21, 2017

The American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work has deep concerns about President Trump's executive order on immigration and the travel ban from seven majority Muslim countries. Although the subsequent legal process suspending the ban and the President's vow to issue an alternative are ongoing and subject to change, many problems remain.

We are concerned about the intent and the manner of the Administration's actions, not only because it fundamentally disregards basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It is an offense to human dignity resulting from the relentless attribution of criminality. Moreover, by transforming immigrants into dangerous "others," it contributes to their demonization. This experience affects the safety, health, and wellbeing of the individuals directly involved, their families, and the larger society.

Our everyday clinical practice is rooted in our deeply held professional values (i.e., dignity and worth of the person; service to humanity) and knowledge of human functioning. We serve diverse populations in public and private settings as they struggle with life's adversities, including the traumatic impact of refugee and immigration experiences. As such, we know about the shame, humiliation, wounding and trauma of "dignity violation"¹ that we experience when the recognition of our humanity by significant others (including social institutions and governments) is absent. Turning people away, particularly refugees who are already traumatized, because of their ethnicity and/or religion, is a harsh judgment and a grave act of dignity violation.

Although we know about loss and trauma, we also know about resiliency and the flourishing of the indomitable human spirit within supportive environments. We choose to respond to the ethical demands inherent in the Immigration and Travel Ban with the power of our cherished values as citizens and mental health professionals. Silence is not an option.

Reference

1. Levine, S. (Ed.) (2016). *Dignity Matters: Psychoanalytic and Psychosocial Perspectives*. London: Karnac Books, Ltd.