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Different but Equal

I have often wondered why is it so hard for people to look past their differences and treat others the way they want to be treated? It seems to me that we all came from the same source, whether you believe it’s from a single cell or God’s creation. Accordingly, despite gender and other physical attributes, we are essentially equal. Therefore, no matter our unique traits, everyone deserves justice. In a moral sense, justice includes giving all human beings respect and understanding. Society, as it is today, tends to lack in this aspect, and as a result, people are being denied the most basic human rights. The direct recipients of this injustice seem to be immigrants and refugees, people who are seeking a safe place to live and opportunities to succeed. In accordance with Alexander Hamilton, justice should be the first duty of society, making each member responsible for helping those in need, especially those who are unable to help themselves.

In the past, America struggled with opening its borders to Jewish, Asian, Irish, or Italian immigrants. Currently, there has been an influx of refugees attempting to escape their war-torn countries of the Middle East. Many of these wars resulted from the consequences of U.S. involvement. And rather than addressing these issues, our current President has decided to pull out our troops out of these countries. Furthermore, he has also banned entry of refugees from Muslim majority countries into the United States. This is an act of injustice, given that government is preventing a safe haven for those who need it. As a result, these refugees are left with no home and hardly any food.

For justice to occur society has to have empathy and sympathy with these people. Society has to put itself in their shoes, in order to realize that the way they are being treated in unfair and unjust. While there are plenty of people against this ban, those in favor do make compelling claims. One of the main reasons as to why we should ban these Middle Eastern immigrants is because it raises the risk of terrorism. Many people take the event of 9/11 as a reason to fear the Middle East, reasonably so. This act of terrorism destroyed the lives of many people, as well as the trust of immigrants from the Middle East. However, many people also take this as a gateway into grouping all Muslims as terrorists, when the majority is just looking for a place to live in safety. This also brings up the fact that many of the more recent attacks were committed by American born citizens. According to Zeljko Trkanjec, a reporter from the International Policy Digest describes recent attacks that took place and were not due to immigrants committing an act of terrorism. He goes on to discuss the shooting at the Pittsburgh Synagogue. “Robert Bowers, a white man, entered and killed eleven people, mostly elderly. He claims to have done so because the Jews supported an immigrant convoy. On November 7th, at a bar in Thousand Oaks California, a 28-year-old white former marine killed twelve people…It is particularly intriguing that...none of the attackers will be charged with terrorism.” (Trkanjec). In our justice system, there seems to be a large difference between criminal and terrorist. When we hear the word terrorist the first thing that comes to mind is the Middle East. While terrorism is a justifiable threat, there is an equal threat already within our borders.

The injustice that those trying to enter the country have endured has already festered among the refugees living within the United States. I have witnessed as a volunteer for a charity organization. Barakah Muslim Charity provides food and clothing distribution for the homeless and those living below the poverty line. Throughout my time volunteering, I have observed that many of the people that walk through the doors are refugees from the Middle East. They seem to be trying very hard to provide for their families in a country where they are constantly being rejected by society. My grandparents and my father were immigrants who entered this country, fulfilling their American dream. And although I am an American Muslim, born in this country, I too have encountered the irrational hate people hold to those from other countries. I have been told on occasion to “go back to my country” when in fact this is my country. In another incidence, I watched as my brother at the age of eight, being detained for three hours at the airport because his name showed up on a terrorist watchlist. I was given the privilege of being born here, getting the right education, and living in comfort. I have faced a few injustices, but nothing compares to the refugees living in this country that are unable to have these same rights. This society as a whole overlooks these people, grouping them as terrorists and criminals and not presenting them with the justice and equality they deserve.

The road to justice will be a long one, but in order to even walk on this road, society needs to reform. While we take into account the threats we need to also put ourselves in the place of these refugees, look at where they came from and their reasons for coming here. Their lives were turned upside down and destroyed like their homes amidst the war. America is a country founded on the notion of liberty and justice, which is why it’s so appealing for people trying to escape their countries. Just like any citizen living here, refugees want freedom and, in most cases, a place to raise their children in safety. Yet, when they get here, they are faced with the same injustices as back home. We need to remind ourselves to “let not the hatred of a people swerve [us] away from justice. Be just, for this is closest to righteousness…” (Quran 5:8).

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