

Gabe Barreto, Skylar Moore, Alex Howlet

Professor Tucker

Writing 101

August 18th, 2021

Muslim Ban Podcast Script

Opening Music or Jingle

Gabe: Good evening and thank you for tuning into our podcast today. I am your host Gabe Barreto joined today by none other than Skylar Moore and Alex Howlet. Jumping straight into today's episode, with our topic of discussion: the Muslim Travel Ban of 2017. We cover former President Trump's Muslim Ban, stereotypes among the Muslim community, the affects of loneliness suffered by Arab-Americans during that time period, along with in depth, raw, emotions from the personal stories heard in response to the travel ban. Stay tuned for a special guest speaker as well. Skylar, Alex, how are we doing today?

Skylar: Doing good, ready to bring this conversation to light this evening.

Alex: Same here, feeling alright, I'm ready to go! (File 1)

Gabe: Yes, a very interesting topic at hand today. Skylar, describe if you will what the "muslim travel ban" really was, and how is it our main focus in today's episode.

Skylar: Gladly. So, the Muslim Ban itself was issued in early 2017 by former President Trump that banned any travel from the middle east to the United States for 3 months. The countries

include; Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The ban had also suspended the resettlement of all Syrian refugees. These countries were targeted due to them being predominantly Muslim countries. Of course this ban was not taken lightly by Muslim-Americans, or any Arab-American for that matter. A source I found called The American Friends Service Committee made a blog about the Muslim Travel Ban, I found this quote about the effects of the ban “The Muslim ban not only impacts people attempting to enter the United States but people who are currently in the U.S. Muslim Americans residing in the U.S. have been cut off from their families and friends who are barred from entering the country. And we've also seen a rise in incidents of intimidation, bias and violence against people in Muslim-American majority communities. (Ibe, 2020)” As we've witnessed the travel ban has caused great harm for families but also violence.

Gabe: Thanks for that, Skylar. As you mentioned, there are numerous personal stories as well. Let's talk about those, because I feel like they do seem very interesting and have the richest type of exposure to this situation. If you have any, please do share.

Skylar: Of course, so a majority of these personal stories are available in the links below and are available on Google. The first story we will be reading is from a student from Muhammad Moustafa, “Moustafa is a trainee doctor at a hospital in Washington, D.C. Like his friend Hajouli, he was raised in Aleppo and left Syria soon after the civil war started. He is in the US on a cultural exchange visa along with his wife, who had been visiting family in Qatar. She arrived back at Dulles airport early Saturday morning, but Trump's executive order was signed while she

was in the air. Because she has a Syrian passport, she was sent back several hours later, he said. Moustafa is devastated and is wishing the New York judge's emergency stay had come earlier in the day. But he said the crowds at Dulles chanting "Refugees are welcome here" have given him hope." What are your opinions on this story guys?

Alex: Hearing these stories of separation is so tragic, I can only imagine the loneliness that comes with this fear and isolation, for both Moustafa and his wife. Muhamad Moustafa had to deal with not only the loneliness and isolation of having his wife cruelly forbidden from entering the country where she lives, but the fear of not seeing his wife ever again. Meanwhile his wife is suddenly cut off from her husband, and the friends and family she had in America, and would also be afraid she'll never see them again. They must both have been utterly despondent.

Gabe: I wonder if they were able to reunite after all. It's hard hearing and seeing those things happen for me personally. A lot of my friends and people I talk to on a daily basis who are Arab or Muslim. I have a close Syrian friend who hasn't been to Syria since 2007, and she isn't really able to go and visit her grandmother and family there due to this horrible civil war and the traveling issues. I have muslim friends who weren't able to make it to certain funerals, weddings, family events back in 2017 due to this ban specifically. Personally, I feel extremely bad for my friends and people around me that deal with those separation issues, and loneliness whenever not able to see a loved one. Alex, what were you thinking of sharing for our next personal story

Alex: I thought it'll be interesting to read off this next story that is pro-Muslim Ban. This story can be found on CNN, "Danny Eapen from New York, the son of Indian parents, was born and

raised in Qatar, and he said he is used to being “extremely screened” when he travels back home to visit his family over the holidays. He doesn’t mind it though. His positive attitude permeated his voice as he explained that, “When I was flying from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Doha, Qatar, I was extremely screened by immigration because they wanted to know why a guy with an Indian passport born and raised in the Middle East is flying back to Doha. That was under (the) Obama administration. So when it happened, I wasn’t mad at them or upset because I know as soon as I touch back in Doha they’re going to do the exact same thing or even worse.” He said in Qatar, “if someone is flying from Jordan into Doha and they see there is a stamp on their passport that they were in Iraq, the airport security would question them. . . . People in the Middle East get screened by others in the Middle East.” Even though Eapen couldn’t vote, he campaigned for Trump and said he doesn’t see the ban as a Muslim ban because so many Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, were left off the list. He saw it as more of an effort to target certain problematic hot spots in the world.”

Skylar: It’s interesting hearing that, I read an article actually the Washington Institute about the responses each country made on the ban enforced against the people, I wrote it down... haha here it is “Saudi energy minister Khalid al-Falih, for example, declared that the United States had the right to take the necessary precautions to protect its people.”

Gabe: That quote from Khalid al Falih seems very reasonable. He understands that the President might have set this ban in place in order to make his people feel safer, yet he probably did not consider those large amounts of Arab and Muslim-Americans that seem to make this country

such a great place to live in. I feel as though they are the backbone of this country, along with other immigrants from various different countries. Now Skylar, this past weekend I heard you met with Professor Eckel, an English professor here at Suffolk University for her take on the Muslim Travel Ban of 2017. Let's cut to the interview at hand shall we.

Skylar: Today, we have a special guest joining our podcast Professor Leslie Eckel from Suffolk University. Hi professor Eckel, how are you today?

Professor Eckel: I'm doing well Skylar, how are you? And Alex too is here with us.

Skylar: That's great. I have some questions for you today, to start off what is your opinion on the Muslim Ban that was placed under the Trump administration?

Professor Eckel: The Muslim Ban is certainly a controversial issue. There was a big increase in immigration restriction and regulation after 9/11, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security under President George W. Bush, and that has three branches. What is known as ICE; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and then the TSA, if I am remembering correctly. So, very much more investment in policing and restriction and rules to keep America safe, and it seems as though the Muslim Ban is a kind of resurgence of those interests in policing access to the country, specifically by people from Muslim countries. I think that it is very aggressive and very violent against people from those countries, many of whom come to the United States to work. You can see and learn that many people from these

countries are doctors, so it really is unfairly targeting certain kinds of people and focusing on exclusion rather than inclusion, which is really more in keeping with the spirit of a pluralist democracy like the United States

Skylar: It really did impact a lot of people. It was very influenced by racism and stereotypes, and it's just something I personally believe is very disgusting and affected. Livelihoods, communities, work, everything. If you don't mind, I'll move on to the second question.

Do you know anyone personally affected by this ban? If so, what was it like for them from your point of view?

Professor Eckel: That's a very thoughtful question too. Sure sure. So, I've taught a class at Suffolk called "Immigrant Stories" for 2 years now. I taught the first version of the class in Fall 2019, and the most recent version in Spring 2021. That class is a wonderful one, because it draws in not only people who are curious about immigration as a topic in their studies in college, but also people who've had very direct and family related experiences with immigration. Sometimes, students who themselves are immigrants to the US, and we all kind of learn together the range of experiences. Although I don't know anyone specifically who was affected by this ban, I certainly worked with students in the Immigrant Stories class who are directly affected by prodigious, by racism of all kinds. Finding common ground and creating a new sense of supportive community in that class is important to the students who are taking it. I've often heard from students that they know people who are on DACA, who are Dreamers, and they are constantly worrying about their

friends who are in these precarious positions. I think these larger policies have very personal and very individual impacts on people that we see and work and study with everyday.

Skylar: even though everyone comes from a different background, ethnicity, culture; do you believe that their immigration stories, specifically international students or students from a different country, do you believe they were brought together even more from this common ground?

Professor Eckel: I do believe that, and just being able to learn from others to see their stories as woven into a larger narrative of the United States as its constantly evolving. It's a really powerful thing, it's empowering for them to feel like they want to show their stories, and they have receptive listeners in the class, they want to take that story out into the world and use it to advocate to others.

Alex: What is your opinion on the stereotypes that are placed amongst Brown people, specifically those who believe in Islam?

Professor Eckel: America is one of the things that we read first in the Immigrant Stories course, and it talks about a teeming nation of nations. There is so much diversity, so much variety and that is beautiful. So judging other people, being harsh, being exclusionary, being violent against people of different races, ethnicities, language groups, documented or undocumented status is very much against the spirit of what I think of as American ideas and core values. So, the

prodigious is really wrong. It has been with the United States since its beginning. At the beginning, citizens were defined as “free white men”, so there is not this kind of racial prejudice issue, there is also a gender issue too. So many people are talking now about freedom as an American value, and religious freedom is certainly an important part of that. To judge people based on their religion, especially based on the actions and beliefs of very extremist individuals is a very dangerous position to take. It’s reducing an entire multi country faith, like Islam, to a very very small and very extreme fraction of it.

Skylar: With this ban, it was mainly focused on specific countries in the Middle East, but it was almost covered as a ban mainly for religion. There is a huge Muslim community in Indonesia, yet they were not apart of the ban. With that information, do you believe that the ban had a different agenda behind it, with all of the racism it has insude with the ban along with what former President Trump has brought up, do you believe there is a secretive thing behind it?

Professor Eckel: I think that Trump got a lot of political moments from him being openly racist, plenty of people were willing to support that. You can see that all the way to the end of his presidency, when Trump supporters rioting and breaking into the Capitol carrying Confederate flags, which are symbols of white supremacy and racism. I think Trump got a lot of traction for taking such a harsh stance, and unfortunately it worked for him. The media called it the “Muslim Ban”, which as you point of Skylar, a misidentification because there were other predominantly Muslim countries that were excluded. It was countries that he didn't like, that we're out of favor, countries that he used that awful profanity for. This is important to recognize. There are many

Muslims living in India, so there's certainly many Muslims here in the United States, so what are we doing? Are we banning ourselves? The nature of the United States is so complex, you can't break it down in this way.

Skylar: The bottom line is, it is a religion and anyone can convert to it. It's not a country, it's simply a religion. It was treated as a hate crime. Hates crimes that affected people due to such stereotypes and racism that insude with it. The last question today, thank you Professor Eckel, is do you have any advice to those who are privileged enough to not experience this type of profiling, and how they can help from the outside?

Professor Eckel: So, one thing is to stay open, listen to others, and what they are going through. Ask them questions about their experiences, hear their stories, about facing prejudice and profiling and racism. Number two, if you see anything like this happening, do show that you are in solidarity with the person while trying to be mindful of your own safety and the safety of someone else too. I've heard that you can see somebody on the subway being verbal abused by another passenger, you can go over to that person who's being targeted and you can start talking to them, or just simply let them know that you're there to support them. That will often discourage the person being aggressive and abusive from carrying that out any further. It's obvious there is somebody else on that person's side. It's important for us to remember that we can be helpful, we can be positive influences in other's lives in bigger and smaller ways.

Skylar: Exactly. Thank you for those examples. I feel like it's very helpful for people who don't really know what to do, or don't know what exactly is the right thing. So thank you for that.

Alex: As a white woman who's lived in a heavily white town, it's important to know how to stand up to this type of thing. I've never really had to deal with this, but I have my best intentions to be able to stand up to that.

Skylar: For me, since I grew up in a latino community and I am first generation myself, I take anything I see as discriminatory very seriously. I watched the ICE raids occur in my city. It's just interesting to see such different backgrounds talk about subjects such as this one because it's just second nature for me. I personally feel like I have a loud mouth, and was raised to not back down. When I see things like that, I get this adrenaline rush and jump right in. If it's a nonviolent situation, try to teach the other side why what they said can be wrong. Some may listen, some may not listen. I found that as a helpful tool at times. I just love hearing different things from different communities, and watching people learn from it. Like Alex, you just said how you've never experienced this but now you have some examples. I just feel like this is a great way for people to interact and come together even more. We'll thank you Professor Eckel for joining our podcast.

Alex: It was really nice hearing from you.

Professor Eckel: It was nice talking to you too Alex, and Skylar. Thank you again.

Gabe: Wow, what an amazing interview there with the Professor. She was very interested in this discussion and made for a wonderful interview. As we wrap up tonight, I'd like to thank

Professor Eckel for joining us and giving her input on the Muslim Ban of 2017 along with pieces of advice. Thank you Skylar and Alex for making that interview possible, along with your amazing personal stories that you two shared earlier. I'd like to thank you, the audience, for listening in and tuning into tonight's podcast episode. I hope that you learned something from hearing our discussion today. Have a good night everybody!