

Trump's travel ban is a national embarrassment

Leonard Pitts

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I have never been more embarrassed for this country.

Under the rubric of protecting Americans from terrorism, the Trump regime last week banned travel into the United States by people from seven majority-Muslim nations. And never mind that experts, including the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank, say the combined U.S. death toll in terrorist attacks from citizens of those nations is zero since 1975.

Trump's ban created predictable chaos around the world. Watching the stranded travelers and bewildered families, I kept wishing I could apologize to those whose lives, careers and plans were thrown into needless turmoil because a minority of American voters chose to invest a fear-mongering man-baby with the awesome powers of the presidency.

That includes Nisrin Omer, a Sudanese woman who has lived in the United States since 1993. She told The New York Times she was handcuffed, searched and interrogated for five hours as she returned from Sudan, where she was doing research for a Ph.D. from Stanford University.

It also includes Sarvin Haghighi, an Iranian woman who wound up stranded in Australia after visiting family there. Her husband, a U.S. citizen named Andrew Culley, told Al-Jazeera she was first admitted to this country only after three and a half years of vetting by the Department of Homeland Security.

Most of all, I wished I could apologize to Hameed Khalid Darwish, a 59-year-old Iraqi man who was handcuffed and spent nearly 19 hours in detention at Kennedy Airport. Over 10 years, Darwish - at grave risk to himself and his family - worked with U.S. military personnel in Iraq as a translator and contractor. For a man who put himself on the line to further American interests and safeguard American lives to be treated like that upon arriving on American soil is shabby beyond belief. Of course, shabbiness is a hallmark of the new regime.

The one heartening thing in this is that the detentions sparked such a great outcry, with mass protests erupting at airports across the country. Taken in conjunction with the Women's March that brought huge numbers to Washington a week and a half ago and inspired echoes across the

country and around the world, it seems not unreasonable to hope that we are seeing the birth of a mass movement here.

It's darn well about time. Over the last 25 years, as conservatism has mutated from a respectable ideology to a cult of perpetual lunacy, progressivism has been marked by an often milquetoast unwillingness to fight for its own values. The tea party organized, demonstrated and became a force in Congress. Progressives wrote think pieces, shared snarky tweets and complained.

These were people whose forebears once took to the streets to stand down racism, sexism, imperialism and homophobia. Now - especially in Congress - they were people who were routinely left standing with their figurative pants yanked down around their metaphorical ankles.

Well, progressives need to stop taking boxing gloves to a knife fight. What is at stake here is not any one ideology, but reason itself, decency itself. A muscular and consistent resistance is required now. Pray God, that's what's taking shape.